

SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF ISAF EXIT FROM AFGHANISTAN ON SOUTH ASIA

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ABSTRACT

SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF ISAF EXIT FROM AFGHANISTAN ON SOUTH ASIA, by Major Muhammad Ramzan Sumbal, Pakistan Army, 106 pages.

This study analyzes the regional security implications of Afghanistan's internal and external environment. Long conflicts have weakened Afghanistan state. In the midst of a fragile Afghan political, economic and security situation, the US plans to draw down its military forces by the end 2014. Long term prosperity incorporating all factions of Afghan society is vital for the stable and peaceful environment. This goal appears very far away. However, Afghanistan is a resilient and warrior nation, and is evolving as a nation-state. It has passed through very arduous times and surfaced, essentially unchanged, again. The current situation reflects historical instability. The future can be better, but depends on a fine balance between the interests of Afghanistan and regional players. Without internal security, Afghanistan will turn into a hotbed of violence. Ethnic proxies of external actors will lead it into even more conflict. Afghanistan's politics are interwoven among tribal intricacies and the interests of several external players, including its neighbors. My analysis concludes Afghanistan is extremely important to the security environment of South Asia. Without a stable and peaceful Afghanistan, South Asian long term stability will not be possible. Narrow national interests will scramble to fill the vacuum after ISAF exits.

This study also includes the discussion on India-Pakistan-Iran relations in the backdrop of Afghanistan. In the post-ISAF environment, a positive sum game is highly unlikely. Without a successful, comprehensive dialogue with all groups, including Taliban, any effort to establish a broad based government will not last long. Only regional consensus and tribal solutions can pave the way for a better future.

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------|--|
| AAF | Afghan Air Force |
| ABP | Afghan Border Police |
| AFPAK | Afghanistan Pakistan Strategy announced by president Obama |
| ALP | Afghan Local Police |
| ANA | Afghan National Security Forces |
| ANCOP | Afghan National Civil Order Policy |
| ANP | Afghan National Police |
| ANSF | Afghan National Security Forces |
| BSA | Bilateral Security Agreement |
| CSTC-A | Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan |
| DDR | Disarmament. Demobilization and reintegration |
| FATA | Federally Administered Tribal Areas |
| GCC | Gulf Cooperation Council |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GWOT | Global War on Terrorism |
| ISAF | International Security Assistance Force |
| ISI | Inter Services Agency |
| NDN | Northern Distribution Route |
| NDS | National Directorate of Security |
| OEF | Operation Enduring Freedom |
| PRT | Provincial Reconstruction teams |
| SCO | Shanghai Cooperation Organization |
| TMAF | Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework |

| | |
|-------|---|
| TTP | Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan |
| UAE | United Arab Emirates |
| UNAMA | United Nations Assistance Mission - Afghanistan |
| US | United States of America |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Afghanistan, being at the crossroad of geography and history, has been deeply affected by the invasions and incursions from outside powers. Due to colonial anomalies and strategic blunders, it is one of the most embattled and dangerous countries in the world.¹ Afghanistan's history is marked by external invasions and internal tribal rivalries. Alexander's battle in Bactria, the Great Game of nineteenth/early twentieth century, the Soviet Union's invasion in 1979 and the ongoing GWOT in early twenty first century, speak of Afghanistan's past and highlight its importance as a geographical pivot.

Afghanistan today mirrors the Afghanistan of yesterday.² Afghanistan is currently passing through a transition phase, as ISAF's commitment is nearing its end. The 2014 Afghan presidential elections results faced a deadlock of almost four months. It was marred by accusations of fraud by the two leading candidates; Mr. Ashraf Ghani and Mr. Abdullah Abdullah. Recently a US backed/supported compromise between two leading candidates has been reached and Mr. Ashraf Ghani took the presidential oath of the office in September, 2014. This environment shows the infancy of Afghanistan's political process. Present day Afghanistan has implications for the future security of South Asia and Central Asia. What happens in Afghanistan is very important for regional and world stability.

Afghanistan is a land locked country. A century ago, it emerged in its present territorial shape.³ It consists of mountains including the Hindu Kush Mountains in the central highlands, valleys and dry deserts in the southern region and fertile plains in the

north. Islam is the predominant religion and guides Afghans in moral and ethical values. Tribalism is the major factor and is central to the social system. As per Article 4 of Afghanistan's constitution, the nation is comprised of Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkmen, Baluch, Pashai, Nuristani, Aymaq, Arab, Kyrgyz, Qizilbash, Gujur, Brahui, and other ethnic groups.⁴ The major ethnic groups include Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Hazaras and Tajiks.⁵

Pashtuns dominate eastern Afghanistan, the area which the coalition failed to completely stabilize. Pashtun warrior behavior is a main contributor to resistance. Pashtuns have a distinct history of armed struggle against invaders. They observe codes of cultural behavior, including tenets of *melmastsia* (hospitality), *badal* (revenge), and *nanag* (honor), and rely on the Jirga System* for their decisions.⁶ *Gahirat* (self-respect), and honor are extremely important. Reeking vengeance on enemies' remains dear to the heart of Afghans. Western and northern Afghanistan is dominated by the Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbek, and Turkmen tribes who also possess distinct tribal cultures, with many traditions are similar to Pashtun tribal culture. But tribal and sectarian differences sustain cultural individuality at the cost of "Afghan" nationalism.

A host of factors including geography, proximity to energy rich Central Asia, mineral resources, and other socio-politico-economic conditions, make Afghanistan very important for South and Central Asia specifically and the world in general. A stable, secure and prosperous Afghanistan, apart from being of paramount importance for the

* Jirga system is a traditional assembly of leaders that make decisions by consensus.

country itself, is also important to the security interests of regional countries and major powers-including the United States.

Given its strategic location and potential to undermine regional security and prosperity, all its neighbors share a common interest,⁷ in the emergence of a stable Afghan state.⁸ Concurrently, Afghanistan's security is influenced by self-interested competition among Russia, China, Iran, India, and Pakistan. In particular, the India-Pakistan rivalry draws Afghanistan into a deadly triangle.⁹ Pakistani-Iranian history also has implications for Afghanistan's internal environment.

This explains the complexity of South Asian security. External competition is typified by the Great Game;[†] an intense rivalry between the British and Russian Empires beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing through 1907. The term "Great Game" is attributed to British intelligence officer Arthur Conolly, and was popularized by Rudyard Kipling.¹⁰ At that time, Tsarist Russia was interested in balancing the British moves in South and Central Asia and, even more importantly, interested in securing its frontiers.¹¹ Britain sought influence or control to buffer British India. Tsarist Russia, meanwhile, sought to expand its territory and sphere of influence in order to create one of history's largest land-based empires. The front line between the two empires ended up running through Afghanistan. Britain's attempts to conquer Afghanistan ended in humiliation, but the independent nation held as a buffer between Russia and India. The Great Game officially ended with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. The

[†] During this time Afghanistan's foreign relations were summarized by Abdur Rehman Khan as "How can a small power like Afghanistan, which is like a goat between these lions [Britain and Tsarist Russia] or grain of wheat between two strong millstones of the grinding mill, stand in the midway of the stones without being ground to dust?"

Convention specified a border line; the Durand Line, between the two empires running from the eastern point of Persia to Afghanistan, and declared Afghanistan a protectorate of Britain. Subsidy agreements led to the dependence of Afghanistan on financial assistance. Bilateral agreement between Britain and Russia formalized its buffer state status. Today, the only change is that more regional and international players are affecting Afghanistan. Economic dependence continues in the form of subsidies from international organizations and the United States (US).¹²

Background

Afghanistan's stability is also influenced by more recent history. The Soviet invasion in 1979 led to Pakistan's increased importance to the West and Islamabad became Washington's key geo-strategic partner, assisting in the regional fight against communism.¹³ The September 11 (9/11) attacks in the United States ushered in a new era with the US-led ISAF intervention, also known as the GWOT (Global War on Terror). The objective of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) was to fight terrorism by eliminating Al Qaeda-another external, albeit subnational, actor. The Taliban's unwillingness or inability to break with Al Qaeda led the US to overthrow their regime. The US made a policy shift away from Pakistan due to Islamabad's close relations with the Taliban. India and Iran replaced the Russian power-broker with the US and pursued their own interests inside through the Northern Alliance (NA).

The NA (Northern Alliance) or United Front, was an armed wing composed of Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras ethnic groups (Shia sect group). The 1990s saw power plays among Afghanistan's neighbors and Middle Eastern interests. It played out through civil

war and struggles to rule among Ahmad Shah Masoud,[‡] General Abdul Rasheed Dostum, Gulbadin Hikmatyar, Sayyaf, the Taliban[§] and the NA. Iran, India, Russia, and Central Asian Countries supported the Northern Alliance¹⁴ in the past and the US did as well immediately after 9/11. The present Afghan government is still dominated by the same groups. Pakistan, UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, had influence on the Taliban.

As announced by President Obama, ISAF is likely to leave Afghanistan in 2014 after thirteen years of engagement.¹⁵ This is likely to commence a new chapter in Afghan security. Long lasting stability will be only possible if Afghanistan is secure from internal and external threats. ISAF withdrawal will create a vacuum inside Afghanistan and provide regional players opportunities for cooperation or exploitive competition.¹⁶ In order to understand the implications of Afghanistan's security on South Asia, it is imperative to understand the Afghanistan's present or planned security arrangements. That can lead us to understand the existing cooperation of different states.

When seen from a regional perspective, the American GWOT provided countries an opportunity and incentive to achieve their respective interests. In this backdrop, all regional players, including Russian, Iran, China, India and Pakistan, executed a timely gambit vying for Afghanistan's friendship and trust. India's investment in national development projects¹⁷ and China's investment in the north are cases in point.

[‡] Killed in Suicide bomb blast in 2001.

[§] Taliban, an Islamic Madrassa students' movement inside Afghanistan. It spread throughout Afghanistan and formed a government, from September 1996 until December 2001, till ISAF attacks. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates accepted the Taliban government inside Afghanistan in 90s. Mullah Omar is the spiritual leader of Taliban Movement.

Afghanistan has been a trend setter of warfare in the past four decades. Afghan Jihad, the role of non-state actors i.e. Al-Qaida, and other related aspects emerged from this country and swathed the world. These trends are likely to impact the regional security environment and has seeds of further global destabilization. Afghanistan's current environment links to the security situation in Middle East and the Ukraine crisis. US withdrawal from Afghanistan is likely to attract converging and diverging interests of global and regional players. The thesis of this research is that post-ISAF Afghanistan will be unstable due to external actor interference and competition, a fragile security environment, and tribal culture intricacies. External actors will not cooperate and each will coopt an Afghan faction. If there is no consensus among external players and a broad based government including the Taliban is not established, Afghanistan will be similar to the post-Soviet era. An independent Afghan state will struggle to survive.

Primary Research Question

What are the security implications for South Asia of ISAF withdrawal from Afghanistan?

Secondary Research Questions

1. What envisaged security setup; organizations, institutions, agencies, and concerns are existing and are likely to exist after ISAF withdrawal?
2. What are the interests of outside powers in Afghanistan?
3. What are the linkages between Afghanistan and the security environment of South Asia, and how do the external influences affect security?

Assumptions

The research paper assumes the announced US withdrawal will proceed and the broad security contours of the security pact between Afghanistan and US are likely to remain the same.

Limitations

This paper will only focus on the security environment of Afghanistan and its linkages with South Asia. It will not discuss the linkages with the Middle East or the Ukraine. Beyond Afghanistan, other possible systemic factors affecting future Central Asian security will not be addressed.

Scope and Relevance of Study

The research will analyze the implications of ISAF withdrawal from Afghanistan. It will explore external nation states' role in Afghanistan and their regional repercussions. As a serving Pakistani army officer, the author has personal observation of the ground realities and experience serving in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). These perspectives are likely to make this paper more interesting for the audience.

Significance of Study

In general, the research is relevant to the prevailing environment in Afghanistan and its importance for South Asian countries and the world. The prevailing environment and the international approach focuses on the enhanced role of India in Afghanistan, reduced influence of Pakistan and denial of space to Russia and China. The US also is currently resorting to a policy of managing Pakistan and facilitating India's enhanced role in Afghanistan.¹⁸ India is taking advantage of the situation by forcing Pakistan to give

away its challenger mode and limit it only to cooperation. This research paper also focuses on the analysis of this aspect of the US approach. The future of the Afghanistan should remain the choice of Afghan people and they should be able to discover their country's relationships. The reality will be different. Despite a residual US troop presence, in the post ISAF environment Afghan national institutions will be critical.

¹ B. N. Mehrish, "Security and Development of Afghanistan: An Appraisal of India's Role and Strategy," *The IUP Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 2 (2013): 29-30, accessed May 4, 2014, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2343455.

² Victoria Schofield, *Afghanistan Frontier: Feuding and Fighting in Central Asia* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2003), 9.

³ Stephan Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the War against Taliban* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2009), 5.

⁴ Barnett R. Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 161.

⁵ U.S. Marine Corps Institute, *An Introduction to the Country and People* (Washington DC: Marine Barracks), 12-17.

⁶ Schofield, *Afghanistan Frontier*, 117.

⁷ Malik Faisal Moonzajer, "Afghanistan 2014: The NATO Withdrawal and the Security Alarms for China-India," Academia.edu, August 2014, accessed November 4, 2014, http://www.academia.edu/8120050/Afghanistan_2014_The_NATO_withdrawal_and_the_security_alarms_for_China-India.

⁸ Clare Castillejo, "Regional Implications of NATO Withdrawal from Afghanistan: What Role for the EU?," *Fride* no. 4, February 2012, accessed August 31, 2014, http://www.fride.org/download/PB_4_NATO_withdrawal_from_Afghanistan.pdf.

⁹ William Dalrymple, "A Deadly Triangle: Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India" (The Brookings Essay, June 25, 2013), accessed November 4, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2013/deadly-triangle-afghanistan-pakistan-india-c>.

¹⁰ Kallie Szczepanski, "What was the Great Game?," Asian History, accessed May 2, 2014, <http://asianhistory.about.com/od/glossaryfj/g/What-Was-The-Great-Game.htm>.

¹¹ Joseph J. Collins, *The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: A Study in the Use of Force in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1986), 4.

¹² Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, 426.

¹³ Major Christopher L. Budihas, “What Drives Pakistan’s Interest in Afghanistan?” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 2011), 17-31.

¹⁴ Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, 12.

¹⁵ White House, *Remarks by the President on the Way Forward in Afghanistan*, Office of the Secretary, June 22, 2011, accessed May 3, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/06/22/remarks-president-way-forward-afghanistan>.

¹⁶ James Konsky, “Exit America, Enter China: The Promise of Chinese Development in Afghanistan,” *Brown Political Review* (December 15, 2013), accessed July 29, 2014, <http://www.brownpoliticalreview.org/2013/12/exit-america-enter-china-the-promise-of-chinese-development-in-afghanistan/>.

¹⁷ Larry Hanauer and Peter Chalk, “India’s and Pakistan’s Strategies in Afghanistan: Implications for the United State and Region” (Occasional paper series, RAND Center for Asia Pacific Policy, 2012), 14-16, accessed August 10, 2014, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2012/RAND_OP387.pdf.

¹⁸ Harsh V. Pant, “India’s Changing Afghanistan Policy: Regional and Global Implications” (Monograph, US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, PA, December 2012), vii, accessed August 10, 2014, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub1141.pdf>.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the 1979 Soviet invasion, Afghanistan has remained at the center of world attention. Since then, a lot was written about the country and region, which provides abundant research material. The highlighted research areas for this review are the historical linkages, state building, the emerging security setup and interests, and regional and global interest.

Victoria Schofield (2009) described the Afghan tribal culture in 1842 as ‘here every man is born soldier, every child has hid knife, and every man has three to four knives.’¹ She analyzed the strong ethnic linkages between Afghan Pashtuns and Pakistani Pashtunwali. Schofield stressed the creation of the Durand Line, Taliban resurgence, and later Taliban power politics established the strong security linkages of Afghanistan to the rest of South Asia. She reiterates today’s Afghanistan can be related with the history,² due to the personal, ethnic, cultural, and religious clashes of leaders. Afghanis of every living generation saw how disorder,³ civil war, donor fatigue, and drugs paralyzed the country.⁴ From their perspective, modern Afghanistan had a semblance of peace under the initial rule of the Taliban. Stephan Tanner (2003) also discussed the broad historical context of Afghan military conflicts.⁵ Due to its location, Afghanistan has seen many invasions. Nonetheless, the mountains regions were inhabited by tribes who have never been conquered. In linkage to the regional environment, Tanner concluded that historically Afghanistan has been intertwined with its neighbors: Persia, Ancient Sogdia, and Central Asia.⁶

Wolfgang Danspeckgruber and Robert P. Finn (2007) edited articles about the “Building State and Security in Afghanistan.” Halley suggests building a strong state to address the problem of insecurity.⁷ His exploration relates to the security apparatus, the state and its design, institutional design, mobilization of the economy, and relations within the region. He emphasized a strong central state as crucial for long stability. He also reiterated that state building is complicated and dependent on durable friendly support.⁸ He postulates that wider long term commitment is important for the rebuilding, but this commitment remains an illusion. Weinbaum (2007) concluded that traditionally defined security in Afghanistan has been elusive, tenuous, and dependent on solidarity groups (*Qaums*).⁹

Barnett R. Rubin (2013), is an Afghanistan subject matter expert and has served in the key positions in the Obama Administration. He stressed the need of for an exit strategy in addition to nation building, but then linked the exit strategy’s sustainability with building institutions.¹⁰ Through discussion of Afghanistan’s past, Rubin related the environment with the Great Game.¹¹ Afghanistan’s relationship to the international system has changed since 1978. It cannot be restored to its former status. The current stability is linked with other actors’ involvement/conflicts, the War on Terror, the India-Pakistan conflict, Russia’s relations with the US, and the US-Iran Conflict. All this makes the solution of the stability problem very difficult to negotiate. James Shinn and James Dobbins (2011) provided an overview of dialogue with the Taliban and converging interests among the main stakeholders. Shin and Dobbins believe cooperation is possible because most Afghans want foreigners to stop interfering in their affairs. He stressed that foreign governments pursue their interests with the limited aim that Afghan territory not

be used to their disadvantage, whether by third parties or the Afghans themselves. All want to ensure terrorists hostile to their countries cannot use Afghanistan as a sanctuary. Afghan masses support reconciliation through dialogue and in this, Pakistan remains the most pivotal among external actors. India, Russia and Iran, however, are not likely to support reconciliation with the Taliban.¹² Marc Grossman (2014), gave the details of these national dialogues, explained the compete process, inbuilt obstacles, and explained the strained US-Pakistani relations since 2011. Grossman did not rule out cooperation, suggesting, “Diplomacy must be backed with force and force must be backed with diplomacy.”¹³

Gabriel Domínguez (2013) stressed ISAF’s withdrawal would have deep implications for South Asia. He highlighted the fears of the Taliban achieving success after the ISAF withdrawal. Tensions between India and Pakistan may intensify if the Afghan political reconciliation process fails.¹⁴ Larry Hanauer and Peter Chalk (2012) posit India and Pakistan as the two most important actors of South Asia. They explained that Pakistan and India have diverging interests.¹⁵ They postulate that India wants to project its power through Afghanistan and is more relevant to emerging US policy favoring a greater Indian role in the region. In comparison, Pakistan’s position in US policy appears to be declining. India seeks political influence in Afghanistan, provides development assistance, promotes investment, regionalizes solutions to security and stability problems, and provides military training. Pakistan has sacrificed a lot for Afghanistan and presently seeks to block India’s influence, promote development, provide economic assistance, maintain notions of strategic depth, undermine Pashtun separatism, and curb other states’ influence. Afghanistan is trying to navigate the rivalry

between Pakistan and India, which makes it a deadly triangle. Willam Dalrymple (2013) declared Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India as 'A Deadly Triangle', which has multiple problems based upon their historical baggage. He predicted intractable Indian-Pakistani friction in the post ISAF era.¹⁶ Vipin Narang (2014), in a talk about US draw down, gave the pessimistic conclusion of the negative direct impact of Indian-Pakistani relations - whose regional rivalry has long complicated the situation.¹⁷

B. N. Mehrish (2013), in an article about India's role concluded that post ISAF security is uncertain. He highlighted the biggest challenge for Afghanistan's internal stability is the role of its neighbors. He visualized and supported a more active role of India, and suggested economic projects such as the Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI) gas pipeline. Besides economic gains for all countries, it could also herald cooperation and peace in the region.¹⁸ Harsh V. Pant (2012) highlighted that Afghanistan is seen by many in India as a litmus test of India's role as a security provider in its own neighborhood.¹⁹ Iran opposes any long-term American presence. Moscow, for its part, having kept itself aloof from Afghanistan and Pakistan for years after the Taliban's ouster, is refocusing on Afghanistan. Russia wants to ensure Afghanistan does not become a source of instability to its territories via other Central Asian states. Pant suggested the use of American hard power and Indian soft power could result in a better future for Afghanistan. He postulates that besides the US, India should have good relations with Russia and Iran to counter balance Pakistan's influence over the Taliban. He also lauded the 2011 Istanbul initiative for committing countries as diverse as China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and Russia to cooperate in countering terrorism, drug trafficking, and insurgency in Afghanistan and neighboring areas.²⁰

Major (P) Christopher L. Budihas (2011) believes Pakistani concerns about Afghanistan are predominantly driven by security interests. His analysis concludes Afghanistan is a fundamental requirement for Pakistan. It ensures Pakistan's very existence as a nation-state against an aggressive Indian neighbor and internal militant groups. Additionally, Pakistan recognizes that without enduring security she will not be able to achieve strong economic growth. He suggests a long term US commitment to the region and support of Pakistan.²¹ Stephan Tanner, also posits Pakistan needs Afghanistan to provide territorial depth against India, a country quintuple its size.²²

Lisa Curtis (2013) testified to the House of Representatives that Pakistani leaders appear to believe US forces will depart the region before Afghanistan is stabilized and calculate that continuing support for the Taliban and the Haqqani network constitutes their best chance to counter Indian regional influence. President Obama's aggressive withdrawal strategy only reinforces their view. Pakistani officials publicly voice support for a stable Afghanistan. This leaves US policy in a conundrum, in which American officials acknowledge the need to work with Pakistan on encouraging a peace process in Afghanistan.²³ Ayaz Gul, quoting Mr. Sartaj Aziz, ** denies all these allegations and counters that Pakistan is busy in fight against terrorism on its internal front.²⁴

Tom Engelhardt (2010) blamed the Af-Pak Strategy for the increase in instability in western Pakistan. The Af-Pak strategy drove an offensive application of force and left Pakistan facing a massive exodus of local refugees.²⁵ Yarniv Barzilai (2013) observed Obama's decision to kill Osama bin Laden inside Pakistan was based on mistrust of

** Pakistan Foreign policy and security advisor to Current Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Pakistan.²⁶ Suba Chandran (2014) gave the details of the growing leadership of insurgency and extremism in Pakistan.²⁷ Dr. Maliha Lodhi (2014) highlighted the successful conduct of Afghan elections 2014, but stressed the need for the perception of free and fair elections for long term stability. She also postulated Pakistan does not support the armed change of power inside Afghanistan.²⁸

Iran's major security concern is the ISAF presence in Afghanistan (Samad 2013). Iran is not in favor of a Western-influenced, democratic, affluent Afghanistan, but, at the same time, is concerned an unstable, opium producing and radicalized Afghanistan also poses a major threat.²⁹ According to James Kinsky (2013), China is poised to act as a stabilizing force in the region, reaping the benefits of American military efforts.³⁰ Chinese state-owned enterprises are pursuing resource development projects. The Chinese are eager to play a more influential role in Afghanistan for their security interests. Cindy A. Hurst and Robert Mathers, discussed the implications of US withdrawal with reference to the presence of an estimated \$1 trillion in minerals in Afghanistan.³¹ Dr. Maliha Lodhi (2014) highlighted China's framework for engagement with Afghanistan as four elements or dimensions: promoting peace and security; assisting in economic development; supporting "political reconciliation"; and strengthening international cooperation. Chinese policy is particularly influenced due to the political and security situation in Xinjiang Province.³²

Joseph J. Collins (1986) explored the historical roots of the 1978 Russian decision to invade Afghanistan. Most prominent were expanding its socialist ideology and the desire for access to warm waters.³³ Rosanne Klass (1987) also reviewed Russian-Afghan relations through a historical lens.³⁴ Moscow's interests are a function of security, great

power geopolitics, and material (Shinn and Dobbins 2011, Khan 1990).³⁵ Dr. Richard J. Krickus (2011) postulates on the prospects of ability of the United States and Russia to cooperate.³⁶ Stratfor (2014), highlighted the ongoing tensions between Russia and NATO over Ukraine raised ISAF concerns over supply through Afghanistan's northern distribution routes.³⁷ Kevin Seiff (2014) also highlighted that Russian interests in Afghanistan are in temporarily low profile, but the relics of Soviet occupation and promoting its own political and cultural prowess almost remains the same.

Clare Castillejo (2012) suggested a sustained solution requires a negotiated political settlement backed by regional powers. Although Afghanistan's internal politics will be crucial after 2014, its neighbors will significantly shape the country's future following ISAF's departure. Castillejo believes without a regionally backed settlement the greatest danger is of a proxy war, with regional powers backing different ethnic or sectarian factions in pursuit of their own interests.³⁸ Ahmad Rashid (2012) also suggested that a long term solution rests in regional consensus. He highlighted US withdrawal should have been based on the conditions not on setting the final date.³⁹ In another article, he observed Afghanistan's internal environment is not ready for a US withdrawal.⁴⁰

US Department of Defense Reports and open sources were consulted for the detailed information about the internal and external security environment. Greg Bruno (2010) and the US Marine Corps (2014) provided basic information about different Afghan security institutions and agencies.⁴¹ Gabriel Domínguez (2013) described how the situation can destabilize quickly after ISAF withdrawal because Afghan troops will be incapable of dealing with the Taliban and warlords.⁴² Pakistani Army Major General

Naveed Mukhtar (2011) highlighted that US draw down is likely to leave Afghanistan at the mercy of competing, converging, and diverging interests.⁴³ Indian Army Major General (Retd) Ashok K Mehta and founding-member of the Defense Planning Staff predicted instability in the post 2014 environment, but also suggested pro-active measures to deny space to Pakistan for supporting the Taliban.⁴⁴ Zachary Laub (2014) highlighted ongoing withdrawals of international soldiers generally coincided with a deterioration of Kabul's control in outlying districts.⁴⁵

¹ Schofield, *Afghanistan Frontier*, 9.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 335.

⁴ Ibid., 337.

⁵ Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History*, 5.

⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁷ William Maley, "Building State and Security," in 'Building State and Security in Afghanistan, ed. Wolfgang Danspeckgruber and Robert P. Finn (Liechtenstein: Trustees of Princeton University, 2010), 11.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 27.

¹⁰ Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, 190.

¹¹ Ibid., 435.

¹² James Shinn and James Dobbins, "Afghan Peace Talks: A Primer" (Research paper, RAND Corporation, 2011), xi, 48, 67, accessed August 12, 2014, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND_MG1131.pdf.

¹³ Marc Grossman, "Talking to Taliban 2011-2012: A Reflection," *Prism Security Studies Journal* no. 4 (2014): 30, accessed October 14, 2014, http://cco.dodlive.mil/files/2014/04/Talking_To_the_Taliban_corrected_II.pdf.

¹⁴ Gabriel Domínguez, “NATO Exit may Trigger ‘Proxy War’ in Afghanistan,” Terminal X (September 16, 2013), accessed August 28, 2014, <http://www.terminalx.org/2013/09/nato-exit-may-trigger-proxy-war-in-afghanistan.html>.

¹⁵ Hanauer and Chalk, “India’s and Pakistan’s Strategies,” 3-9.

¹⁶ Dalrymple, “A Deadly Triangle.”

¹⁷ Peter Dizikes, “After the U.S. Leaves Afghanistan, then What?” *MIT News*, February 19, 2014, accessed August 30, 2014, <http://newsoffice.mit.edu/2014/after-the-us-leaves-afghanistan-then-what-0219>.

¹⁸ Mehrish, “Security and Development of Afghanistan,” 36.

¹⁹ Pant, “India’s Changing Afghanistan Policy,” iii.

²⁰ Ibid., 30.

²¹ Budihas, “What Drives Pakistan’s Interest in Afghanistan?” 55-57.

²² Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History*, 336.

²³ Lisa Curtis, *After the Withdrawal: The Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Part II)*, Testimony before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa and Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific Committee on Foreign Affairs, United States House of Representatives, October 29, 2013.

²⁴ Ayaz Gul, “Pakistan Denies Protecting Pro Taliban Haqqani Network,” Voice of America, February 27, 2014, accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.voanews.com/content/pakistan-denies-protecting-pro-taliban-haqqani-network/1860658.html>.

²⁵ Tom Engelhardt, Going for Broke: Six Ways the Af-Pak is Expanding,” in *The Case for Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, ed. Nick Turse (Verso: 2010), 121.

²⁶ Yarniv Barzilai, *102 Days of War: How Osama Bin Laden, AL Qaeda and the Taliban Survived 2001* (Dulles: Potomac Books, 2013), 125.

²⁷ Suba Chandran, “Mullah Fazlullah: Challenges to the ‘Eliminate or Extradite’ Approach,” Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, July 7, 2014, accessed July 26, 2014, <http://www.ipcs.org/columnist/d-suba-chandran/>.

²⁸ Dr. Maleha Lodhi, “Tougher Challenges Ahead,” *The News*, April 18, 2014, accessed July 26, 2014, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-244907-Tougher-challenges-ahead>.

²⁹ Omar Samad, “Iran’s Influence in Afghanistan after U.S. Pullout,” U.S. Institute of Peace, Iran Primer, January 17, 2013, accessed August 31, 2014,

<http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2013/jan/17/iran%E2%80%99s-influence-afghanistan-after-us-pullout>.

³⁰ Konsky, “Exit America, Enter China.”

³¹ Cindy A. Hurst and Robert Mathers, “Strategic Implications of the Afghan Mother Lode and China’s Emerging Role,” *Joint Force Quarterly* (1st quarter 2014): 75, accessed September 12, 2014, <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/afghan-mother-lode.pdf>.

³² Dr. Maleha Lodhi, “China’s Afghan Policy,” *The News*, December 24, 2013, accessed July 23, 2014, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-222149-Chinas-Afghan-policy>.

³³ Collins, *The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*, 30.

³⁴ Rosanne Klass, *Afghanistan: The Great Game Revisited* (New York: Freedom House, 1987).

³⁵ Major Khalid Nawaz Khan, “Soviet Interests in Afghanistan and Implications upon Withdrawal” (Master’s Thesis, Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, June 1990), 17.

³⁶ Richard J. Krickus, “The Afghanistan Questions and the Reset in the U.S.-Russian Relations (Letort paper, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, October 2011), x.

³⁷ Stratfor Global Intelligence, “Russian Decision Could Complicate the Supply Lines to Afghanistan,” April 7, 2014.

³⁸ Castillejo, “Regional Implications of NATO Withdrawal from Afghanistan.”

³⁹ Ahmad Rashid, *Pakistan on the Brink: The Future of America, Pakistan, and Afghanistan* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012).

⁴⁰ Ahmed Rashid, “Before the Endgame: America’s Fatal Flaws in Afghanistan,” *Der Spiegel* (May 25, 2010), accessed July 26, 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/before-the-endgame-america-s-fatal-flaws-in-afghanistan-a-696662.html>.

⁴¹ Greg Bruno, “Afghanistan National Security Forces,” Council of Foreign Relations, updated August 19, 2010), accessed August 9, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/afghanistans-national-security-forces/p19122>.

⁴² Domínguez, “NATO Exit may Trigger ‘Proxy War’ in Afghanistan.”

⁴³ Major General Naveed Mukhtar, “Afghanistan: Alternative Futures and their Implications,” *Parameters* (Summer 2011): 65, accessed July 21, 2014,

<http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/articles/2011summer/Mukhtar.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, “Opening remarks by Major General (Retired) Ashok K Mehta,” report by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung on Afghanistan, July 16 2014, accessed July 26, 2014, <http://www.ipcs.org/article/afghanistan/afghanistan-and-regional-security-after-elections-4562.html>.

⁴⁵ Zachary Laub, “The Taliban in Afghanistan,” Council of Foreign Relations, updated: July 4, 2014, accessed August 9, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/taliban-afghanistan/p10551>; Zalmay Khalilzad, “Why the Country needs a Long-Term Commitment from the United States,” *Foreign Affairs* (December 2011), accessed August 9, 2014, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/136870/zalmay-khalilzad/the-three-futures-for-afghanistan>.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative case study using a rational choice paradigm. The research links Afghanistan's security milieu with the interests of regional players after ISAF withdrawal, and analyzes the likely security implications on for all South Asia. The research discusses historical aspects of Afghanistan in the South and Central Asian framework, its current security environment and possible future outcomes. The methodology will primarily be descriptive in nature.

I will use descriptive theory and explore the abstract implications of ISAF withdrawal. Although Afghanistan's pre 9/11 and current security environment has been widely researched, I will examine likely outcomes of ISAF withdrawal on South Asian security by analyzing the interests of internal and external actors and the strengths and weaknesses of Afghan institutions. A descriptive case study is focused and detailed, in which propositions and questions about a phenomenon are carefully scrutinized and articulated at the outset.¹ Personal experience provided me additional depth in the topic. The rational choice paradigm frames the choices of external state actors in terms of cooperation or competition. Rational choice theory starts with the idea that individuals have preferences and choose according to those.²

Economics is pivotal to the political and military security of states, and assists to understand converging and diverging behaviors. States are often motivated by money and the possibility of making a profit, calculating the likely costs and benefits of any action before deciding what to do.³ They are likewise security motivated (Waltz, 1979).

Similarly, Afghanistan is transitioning from a state dependent on external actors

providing economic and security assistance to one able to make its own choices for pursuing its economic and national interests. This “witches brew” makes the whole region simultaneously attractive, volatile and disturbing. All players are trying to maximize their gains in Afghanistan.

The paper is aiming to extricate the relevant implications from the prevailing environment for future regional security. The ISAF withdrawal from a long campaign is likely to create a political and economic vacuum. The secondary questions will provide the suitable criteria for validity and necessity of the security implications.

The thesis will conduct a deep case study to determine the contextual information and background data that evolved into the current situation facing Afghanistan. Chapter 4 will analyze the available information on Afghanistan’s internal environment. Chapter 4 details important linkages, the security environment, and the internal capacity/developments of Afghan security institutions. Chapter 5 researches external actors’ perception of the prevailing environment, their interests, and the ways in which they can influence the security environment. After exploring the internal security environment and the interests of different regional/international players, the security implications will be derived and discussed in chapter 6.

¹ Ruthanne Tobin, “Descriptive Case Study,” Sage Research Methods, accessed October 29, 2014, <http://srmo.sagepub.com/view/encyc-of-case-study-research/n108.xml>.

² Jonathan Levin and Paul Milgrom, “Introduction to Choice Theory,” September 2004, accessed May 2, 2014, <http://www.stanford.edu/~jdlevin/Econ%20202/Choice%20Theory.pdf>.

³ Ashley Crossman, “Rational Choice Theory-An Overview,” About.com, accessed May 2, 2014, <http://sociology.about.com/od/Sociological-Theory/a/Rational-Choice-Theory.htm>.

CHAPTER 4

WITHIN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is in transition. The Taliban remains a relevant and potent adversary. The US withdrawal will leave security responsibility solely, or at least largely, to the Afghan government by 2016/17. This defining moment will shape the security future of all South Asia. The tentative ISAF withdrawal plan is likely to allow 9800 troops by the end of 2014, half that number at the end of 2015, and only traditional embassy personnel by the end 2016.¹ Under the BSA (see APPENDIX B), troops will have a narrow mission: training Afghan troops and supporting counter terrorism operations.² In anticipation of withdrawal, the West expended a huge amount of money and resources on the capacity of security and government institutions. Despite the huge investment, Afghanistan remains a world trouble spot. The present violence reflects that. Nonetheless, at the end of 2014, the US is likely to handover security to the ANSF and ANA.

Prevailing Environment

History provides relevant context. Afghanistan today is at the same juncture as it was at in the 1990s. Six plus two,^{††} and Rome group,^{‡‡} like initiatives are replaced with the regional and international initiatives for a peaceful and broad based government.³ A broad based national government is being pursued on the political front, similar to Hamid

^{††} Afghanistan's neighbors plus US and Russia. Lakhdar Brahmi in UN special mission for Afghanistan tried to develop the consensus from 1997 to 1999. The process was suspended by Brahmi due to Taliban offensive of July 1999.

^{‡‡} Brahmi's successor Francesc Vendrell, tried in 1999 to start a Loya Jirga process to negotiate between king Zahir Shah and Northern Alliance.

Karzai's testimony to US Senate in July 1999.⁴ In the 2001 Bonn Conference and Loya Jirga in 2003, the international community and Afghans agreed on a constitution and government setup. The present Afghan government was predominantly formed from a local faction of the NA group. As the NA helped the international coalition in OEF, it presently holds the key government positions. Pashtuns have minimal representation in the present setup. This has serious ramifications.

The security of any country is very closely linked with the social, political and economic situation. The security environment cannot be assessed, visualized and predicted without the examining the overall environment. Political interests affect the definition of security objectives, priorities, and security tasks.⁵ Before moving on to the security environment, an appraisal of current political and economic situation is required.

Political situation

Afghan society is egalitarian but frequently unstable.⁶ There are many dimensions of the political environment, but this paper emphasizes the security implications of the political situation. The current Iraqi situation provides insights into the possible future. In 2009, US forces left Iraq. They had created an Iraqi government and handed over security to Iraqi Security Forces. After almost 5 years, Iraq is again unstable and in crisis. ISIS/ISIL influence, indeed control, approximately 30 percent of Iraq. Iraq has turned into a great quagmire, which is affecting the security of the entire Middle East. On the Afghan front, the situation is similar. The US tailored its notion of victory to defeating Al Qaeda only. It declared achievement of its objectives and announced its withdrawal. Does this optimistic assessment square with reality? Keeping the Iraq context in mind, let us see the Afghan political situation.

The 2001 Bonn Conference and 2003 Loya Jirga provide the legal framework for the current government. Afghanistan is a unitary, centrally administered state. A president heads the administration with 32 provinces (*Walyat*) governed by appointed governors, districts (*Wuluswalis*), and a few subdivisions (*Alaqadaris*).⁷ The distinction between state and administration is very important in the Afghan context. Lower administrative pedestals exert considerable influence on stability. The lower administrative structure, i.e. *Wuluswalis*, and *Alaqadaris*, have remained relatively stable for centuries.⁸ Less the Amir Abd al-Rahman Khan (1880-1901), a national Afghan state framework has remained elusive.⁹

Ethnicity shapes the security and political environment. Ethnic minorities in the north are more accustomed to strong central government than southern Pashtuns.¹⁰ Afghanistan is divided into several ethnically dominated regions. The NA dominates Hazarajat and Nuristan (less Malawi Afzal's part of Nuristan), Kapisa, Balkh, Kabul, Kunduz, Baghlan, Takhar and Badakshan provinces. Western Afghanistan, including Herat, is dominated by the warlord Ismail Khan. Abdul Rashid Dostum, an Uzbek, exerts influence on the regions neighboring Uzbekistan. Eastern Afghanistan is dominated by the Pashtuns and acts as the Taliban's base. The Taliban, Al Qaeda and other insurgent groups draw support predominantly from Pashtun areas. These ethnic divisions support different armed groups. The NA group dominates present internal politics and the security environment. The Taliban and Al Qaida remain the adversary. Collective actors such as political parties are still not defined. Politics are personalized and revolve around powerful warlords.¹¹

The most powerful and recent external actor, the US, has transited through several policy options, significant troop surges, and diplomatic offensives to stabilize Afghanistan. The US Af-Pak strategy focused on developing, with the assistance of the international community, the capacity Afghan government. It also identified Pakistan as a root cause of instability. This overtly brought Pakistan into the campaign theatre with targeted drone attacks and a surge in CIA operations. The overall American focus is on trying to establish a stable security environment by concentrating on the political, economic, and military and information domains of local Afghan governments. The hope is the Afghan government will become capable of taking on security and governance responsibilities after the US withdrawal.

There is evidence Afghanistan is moving forward. The 2014 elections were relatively peaceful and saw a significant turnout of voters. This was a moment of satisfaction for the US. But the aftermath of the 2014 elections showed the infancy of Afghan democracy. Deadlock existed for almost four months, ending in September 2014 after a US backed compromise. The outcome of these elections and its aftermath, are indication of future political instability without a robust US presence in the background brokering the distribution and exercise of power. The divisions were demographically based. Abdullah mustered support from Tajik ethnic factions and Mr. Ghani drew support from Pashtun areas. Ethnic fault lines are likely to persist even after a compromised political settlement. Premature US withdrawal will only exacerbate the situation.

One fact remains inescapable, Afghanistan's society is based on tribal, not national, culture. This culture manifested in armed opposition over the past three decades. The political environment lacks stability because of ethnic divides, drug trafficking, and a

weak economy. Not all indications are negative. For example, the November 2013 Loya Jirga endorsed the BSA and high turnout for the April 2014 election are positive indicators for a peaceful political process. The national institutions are continuously improving their ability to provide constitutional, stable, responsive and effective government. But still, widespread corruption, ineffective monitoring, low revenue generation, illiteracy, lack of coordination between center and provinces, insufficient management capacity, and an uneven distribution of power among branches of the government remain big challenges.¹²

Present Economic Situation and Future Indicators

Afghanistan's economy is entirely dependent on external links for access to imports and exports.¹³ It is landlocked, mountainous, and underdeveloped. In the 1970s, the Afghan economy was rural and subsistence, and largely dependent on foreign aid.¹⁴ From 1979 to 1989, violence destroyed the rural economy and introduced rapid monetization.¹⁵ During the Taliban era, stiff sanctions from the international community overwhelmed the economy of Afghanistan.¹⁶ The Taliban prohibited poppy cultivation, but could not stop drug trafficking and illegal smuggling.

Afghanistan remains dependent on foreign assistance. The internal economy of the country is underdeveloped due to political instability and a decade's long war. Increasing domestic revenues is imperative, but the domestic sector remains weak. If it continues, the country's financial needs are expected to increasingly outstrip resources, especially as international assistance declines after 2014.¹⁷ Afghanistan requires constant financial support from external actors, which may be available only briefly after ISAF withdrawal. Current frameworks of financial aid include The Tokyo Mutual

Accountability Framework (TMAF),^{§§} and the Afghanistan transformation decade. TMAF agrees to provide \$500 million per year by 2015, and continue to pay for an increased percentage of the overall security budget until 2024, when the Afghan government will be responsible for 100 percent of its own security costs.¹⁸ At Bonn in 2011, 85 nations, 15 international organizations, and the United Nations reviewed the last decade progress and planned on a transformation decade from 2014-2024.¹⁹ Agreement and implementation of transformation mechanisms and the distribution of funds remains elusive. To label the future uncertain is an understatement.²⁰

Afghanistan economic indicators are less positive than expected. The government missed its FY 2013 revenue target of \$2.03 billion by 5 percent. The World Bank estimates the gap will reach 25 percent of GDP in 2018 and remain at 20 percent of GDP until at least 2025.²¹ Despite some progress in revenue generation, Afghanistan had one of the world's lowest fiscal sustainability ratios.²² Its GDP has grown rapidly since 2001, recording average growth of 9-10 percent annually. In 2012, GDP was approximately \$20.5 billion. This report challenged assumptions about economic sustainability. According to the latest World Bank report, economic growth in 2013 was estimated at 3.6 percent, down from 14.4 percent in 2012. Inflation is up to 7.7 percent, and the economy is projected to remain weak in 2014.²³

The economic situation in coming years will also be greatly affected by the security situation and will reciprocally affect the security condition.²⁴ Interdepartmental friction and a tribal warlord culture provides more power to the Ministry of Defense. The

^{§§} The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) remains the main framework of the relations between donors and Afghanistan.

Ministry of Finance depends on it for security reasons, and this gives monopoly to the NA. The ISAF presence currently provides the required security and autonomy to the Ministry of Finance. For example, it occasionally sought help from ISAF to gain control of custom check posts.²⁵ The reduction of ISAF personnel will likely have a negative effect on future economic growth.²⁶ The security environment makes Afghanistan's economic future very fragile. Sustained funding is essential for the transition of security, governance, and the establishment of a safe environment in which Afghans can prosper.²⁷

Security Institutions

Traditionally, Afghan security has been elusive and tenuous. It is dependent on the culture of warlords, armed movements, patron-client relationships and solidarity groups (*Qaum*).²⁸ Afghans use communities as an instrument of state control over the people, rather than the state offering physical and social security.²⁹ The Islamic resistance of 1978 was a landmark in security history, leaving permanent imprints on how the state functions.

Afghanistan's most recent security chapter starts from the US GWOT in the aftermath of 9/11. Before the GWOT, Afghanistan was torn apart by two decades long conflict. Under Chapter VII of Security Council Resolution 1386, ISAF became in charge of the international military operation while the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) took charge of international civic activities. Afghanistan's New Beginnings Program (ANBP), a project of the UNDP, was responsible for security sector reform and related programming, including DDR.³⁰ The US, along with a group of eight,^{***} became

^{***} U.K, France, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, Romania, Bulgaria and Mongolia.

primary sponsor with the UN as overseer.³¹ Security sector reforms (SSR) were part of nation building.³² Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were also set up to deny spaces to insurgents.³³ SSR and PRTs are currently the basic framework for security. President Obama's Af-Pak strategy aims to build domestic security forces to the point where they can take replace ISAF.³⁴ Since the 2009, the Af-Pak strategy resulted in peak troop levels,^{†††} and redoubled civilian efforts.³⁵

The ANSF must become the major effort and security provider. Since August 2008, it already took lead responsibility for Kabul and is currently extending its reach into some provinces.³⁶ The ANSF consists of three principal components: ANA, Afghan Air Force (7,000 personnel and 126 aircraft-by 2016),³⁷ and Afghan National Police.³⁸ Afghan Special Forces are also part of the ANSF. The Ministry of Defense controls the army and air force. The Ministry of the Interior and Intelligence Services controls police forces, including national border, highway, and counternarcotic branches.³⁹

The ANA is the main part of NDS and is envisaged to take over primary responsibility for security of the Afghan state. The NA is the basic ethnic building block and genesis of the present ANA. The NA is partisan actor and was constituted from the core of Ahmad Shah Massoud's forces. The secret negotiations between UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan), the US, a few members of Afghan government, and the Shura-yi Nazar council,^{‡‡‡} set the framework for the composition

^{†††} About one hundred thousand by June 2011.

^{‡‡‡} Supervisory council of north.

and powers of the ANA. Marshall Faheem,^{§§§} was central to the development of the ANA. As defense minister and Tajik nationalists, he influenced the establishment, recruitment and creation of a biased and partisan ANA.⁴⁰

Under the 2005 National Directorate of Security (NDS) reform initiative, the Coalition sponsored a move away from factional control of the ANA and sponsored Abdul Rahim Wardak as defense minister.⁴¹ General Bismullah Mohammadi (current defense minister), and Marshall Fahim, and other prominent leadership of NA were the main crafters of the reformed ANA. These individuals were close allies of Ahmad Shah Massoud, and had strong Anti-Taliban (Pashtun) biases. General Bismillah Mohammdi was the Chief of General Staff from 2003 until becoming the interior minister in 2010 and eventually the defense minister in 2012.⁴² His longevity in key positions suggests the NDS reforms at best marginally changed the ethnic dominance of the ANA. A detailed timeline of ANA developments is in ‘APPENDIX A’. As of March 2014, ANSF force strength reached to 340,632 personnel, 97.4 percent of the 352,000^{****} authorized end-strength.

Almost all ANSF unit and major equipment fielding is complete, including its 309 programmed *Kandaks*^{††††} (battalions). The ANA is scheduled to receive all of its equipment by July 2014 and the last *Kandak* will complete training in January 2015.

^{§§§} Faheem was the leader of the NA that supported the American attacks against Taliban. Faheem remained as the defense minister from 2002 to 2004 and vice president until his death in 2014.

^{****} Including 26,632 ALP personnel, security forces totaled 376,264.

^{††††} The Kandak, or battalion, of 600 troops is the basic unit of the ANA. Most Kandaks are infantry units.

Structurally, the ANA is divided into six ground-maneuver corps as regional commands: 201 Corps in Kabul, 203 Corps in Gardez; 205 Corps in Kandahar; 207 Corps in Herat; 209 Corps in Mizar-e-Sharif.⁴³ Each corps is comprised of 2-4 brigades. Each brigade is comprised of infantry Kandaks, combat support Kandaks, and combat service support Kandaks.⁴⁴ There have been substantive efforts by the US and Coalition to recruit a balanced, ethnically diverse army, proportionally representative of the population. Presently, the ANSF demographic profile is Pashtuns 44 percent, Tajiks 25 percent, Hazaras 10 percent, Uzbek 8 percent, and 13 percent other ethnic groups.⁴⁵

According to the Pentagon, through 2010 the U.S. government spent over \$25 billion to train and equip army and police forces since 2001. An additional \$14 billion is requested through 2011.⁴⁶ Allies and partners in at the Chicago NATO Summit pledged more than \$1.1 billion per year for sustaining and supporting ANSF in 2015, 2016, and 2017.⁴⁷ In 2003, an ANA recruit's salary increased to \$70 per month and a battalion commander's salary was increased to \$300 per month. As an added bonus, soldiers received \$2 for each day spent on field operations. In the summer of 2006, the Taliban⁺⁺⁺⁺ were reportedly offering three times the daily pay of the ANA, approximately \$300 a month for the equivalent of a first-year ANA soldier. Additionally, the Taliban reportedly offered: "\$10 to \$20 per day for joining attacks on Western forces, \$15 to launch a single mortar round into nearby coalition military bases, and \$1,000 for the head of a government worker or a foreigner."⁴⁸

⁺⁺⁺⁺ TTP; Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan faction of Taliban movement, is also paying the salary to their foot soldiers, on the same lines.

The Afghan National Police (ANP) consist of a Uniformed Police responsible for general enforcement and public safety, a Border Police which patrols the borders and conducts counter-smuggling operations, and a Civil Order Police which controls disturbances in urban areas.⁴⁹ The most capable pillar, however, is the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP). ANCOP is a well-trained, well-led, effective, and 14,000 person force capable of autonomous operations without coalition support. There is also a Tribal Protection Force, an experimental militia program in Wardak province modeled after a similar local security force program in Iraq. These units are recruited and vetted by regional leaders, who assume responsibility for their performance and discipline. As of March 2014, their numbers across districts grew to 26,647.⁵⁰

Analysis of Internal Factors

Afghanistan's political process remains uncertain, as evidenced by the aftermath of the 2014 presidential. Afghanistan has progressed in health, education, and economics, but the Taliban, violence, factionalism, corruption and governance remain the key issues.⁵¹ The government is unable to exercise control over all of Afghanistan.⁵² The current government lacks the ability, and in certain sectors, the will to deliver. Many reports about the ANA suggest they are incapable of controlling the insurgents without the Allied help.⁵³

Planned Allied military strength is likely to be 10,000 Americans and 14,000 other troops at nine locations, which appears insufficient.⁵⁴ The withdrawal does not bode well for security. President Obama's announcement of the US pull out was supposed to

be conditions based.^{§§§§} However, his 2009 West Point speech omitted this and gave final pull out date instead.⁵⁵ The surge made some progress, but the tight deadlines for withdrawal and Taliban resilience have left insurgents in control of enough territory to remain militarily viable well after 2014. The ANSF will thus inherit a more demanding job than expected.⁵⁶

The political environment is the major hurdle. The two top 2014 presidential candidates, Mr. Abdullah Abdullah and Mr. Asharf Ghani, reached a compromise. Mr. Ghani has replaced Mr. Hamid Karzai and Mr. Abdullah is the chief executive officer (a position not mentioned in constitution). This new administration, with the only change being faces, like previous ones, lacks credibility, will, a pragmatic strategy or a vision for the future. They are likely to follow the same Karzai strategy, which accomplished little for security and stability.

The Taliban will remain the main challenge to the new Afghan administration. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 8,615 civilian deaths and injuries in 2013, a 14 percent increase over the previous year and the highest toll since it began keeping records in 2009. The Taliban may even increase the pace of attacks after ISAF withdrawal. In some isolated areas they have already established shadow hidden governments. Many rural Afghans have come to trust the Taliban's extensive judicial network over government courts to "solve disputes in a fair way, without tribal or ethnic bias, or more commonly, without having to pay bribes," says Graeme Smith, a Kabul-based senior analyst at the International Crisis Group.⁵⁷ The Taliban also draw power from tribal culture and ethnic linkages. Taliban resurgence

^{§§§§} 2009 US President's speech at West Point.

began in 2007 and afterwards did not see downward trends. It still enjoys continued support from Eastern Afghanistan. The Asia Foundation found that in 2013, a third of the population, mostly Pashtuns and rural Afghans, had sympathy for armed opposition groups, primarily the Taliban.⁵⁸ In some outlying districts, Afghan forces and local insurgents have reached informal ceasefires that effectively cede a degree of authority to the Taliban. The UN reported in 2014 that the Taliban maintained outright control of four districts, out of 373 nationwide, but the insurgency's reach extends much further: some 40 percent of districts had a "raised" or "high" threat level.⁵⁹

After the Soviets departed in 1989, the Najibullah regime lasted for only three years. The current Afghan government is more popular than Najibullah's was, but it is not without vulnerabilities.⁶⁰ The current political process still does not include the Taliban, which represents significant parts of Pashtun ethnic faction. Some people view the insurgency as a Pashtun rebellion against the Afghan government.⁶¹ The US started negotiations with Taliban, but there are still no significant achievements. The 2011 assassination of Burhan Uddin Rabbani, the head of President Karzai's High Peace Council, and deadlock in Qatar negotiations have completely halted this process.⁶² The US also undertook some confidence building measures with the Taliban. The latest is the episode of Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl's release in exchange for the release of notable Taliban leaders from Guantanamo Bay. But negotiations remains halted. Without any major policy change, Taliban participation in the political process appears almost impossible. The Taliban are likely to continue and even intensify their struggle after US withdrawal.

A relatively deceptive period of calm does not reflect success.⁶³ ISAF presence provided autonomy to Afghanistan's government and its absence will affect its working. The Karzai government was challenged by northern warlords and Taliban militants, as it happened in the past.⁶⁴ After ISAF, the situation will remain same or may worsen. Some ethnic factions are already recruiting militiamen and some elites are moving their businesses out of Afghanistan.⁶⁵ An Asia Foundation survey found that many civilians see government institutions such as the militia-like local police as predatory.⁶⁶ A strong military force can pay rich dividends for stability, but political control or factional influence affects credibility, legitimacy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Other nations and empires achieved this same kind of peaceful, eerie lull, only to find the Afghans had really not been beaten.⁶⁷ Recent violent events indicate it will be difficult for ANSF to operate independently in the near future, especially in Pashtun areas.⁶⁸ Despite Coalitions efforts, the ANSF remains a factional, rather than national, force. On the surface, ethnic profile figures reflect pronounced Pashtun representation. But on the ground fact remains that the core of ANSF is NA. In addition to factionalism, they also lack capability. It will be difficult for the ANSF to bring stability against Taliban. The relatively peaceful conduct of 2014 presidential election, is an only major recent achievement of ANSF.⁶⁹ ANA logistics, enablers and sustainment remains a problem. Security institutions lack professionalism. They have high attrition rates, predatory corruption, criminal patronage, weak rule of law, narco-trafficking and corruption. Drug abuse remains rampant (in March 2010 the Pentagon reported that 14 percent of active officers have tested positive for hash, opium, or methamphetamines). Desertion and violence are persistent challenges.⁷⁰ They lack equipment and training.⁷¹ It

is mistaken to believe a nascent ANSF could exercise the necessary degree of control to transition to local governance.⁷² Border security is also an insurmountable task for the ANSF.⁷³ Above all, the perception of support by an illegitimate and corrupt central government affects ANSF credibility.⁷⁴

Capacity and legitimacy are also interconnected.⁷⁵ In the last decade, the Coalition supported and sponsored westernized individuals in the Afghan government. Immersed in western culture, they lack understanding of ground realities. Their attempts to quickly change Afghanistan did not work and are not likely to work. Despite these reversals, US policy makers have pursued political and military solutions in isolation. They did not support the factions and individuals who could have lent legitimacy and credibility and improved the capacity of government. Although money works in Afghanistan or any culture, gains are temporary. Money does not replace the bonds of religion and ethnicity. Only legitimacy will sustain Afghan security.

Stalemate and status quo is likely to persist. A mid-term peace deal with the Taliban can provide further time for the ANSF to muster its capability and through reintegration of Pashtun population. Some Taliban factions can also be brought to cooperate with ANSF. However, Afghan ownership of the security and economic problems, the outcome of the Afghan presidential election deadlock, international financial support after 2014, and the lack of US presence post-2014 will determine the environment.⁷⁶

A long string of tedious, short term successes will be necessary. Afghan transition depends on dialogue and reconciliation. Dr. Maliha Lodhi, a well-known Pakistani diplomat, observed that the successful political transition has to result from serious intra-

Afghan dialogue that yields political accommodation among the various parties and with the armed opposition. This reconciliation process can delegitimize fighting by the Taliban and influence them to agree to talk directly with the new administration.⁷⁷ Ideally, a political process inclusive of all ethnic factions is the way forward. Commitments from regional players and neighbors to the political process are vital. But in Afghanistan, internal players are the determining factors. ISAF and the US should only leave Afghanistan after an effective, broad based central government has been established. For major investment and development projects to succeed on the long term basis, a stable and effective central government in Kabul is key.⁷⁸

¹ Larsen House Government Press, "Larsen's Statement on President Obama's Plan to Withdraw from Afghanistan," May 28, 2014, accessed July 24, 2014, <http://larsen.house.gov/press-release/larsen-statement-president-obama%E2%80%99s-plan-withdraw-afghanistan>.

² ABC News, "President's Obama statement on withdrawal from Afghanistan," accessed July 24, 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-28/full-withdrawal-of-us-troops-from-afghanistan-by-2016/5482532>.

³ Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, 14.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 205.

⁶ Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Security in Afghanistan: A Historical Perspective," in *Building State and Security in Afghanistan*, ed. Wolfgang Danspeckgruber and Robert P. Finn (Liechtenstein: Trustees of Princeton University, 2010), 28.

⁷ Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, 109.

⁸ Ibid., 111.

⁹ Ibid., 113.

¹⁰ Weinbaum, "Security in Afghanistan," 31.

¹¹ Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, 14299.

¹² U.S. Department of Defense, *Progress towards Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2014, accessed August 9, 2014, http://www.defense.gov/pubs/April_1230_Report_Final.pdf.

¹³ Weinbaum, "Security in Afghanistan," 34.

¹⁴ Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, 54.

¹⁵ Ibid., 55.

¹⁶ Ibid., 48.

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Defense, *Progress towards Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2014.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Grossman, "Talking to Taliban 2011-2012: A Reflection," 24.

²⁰ Krickus, "The Afghanistan Questions," 84.

²¹ U.S. Department of Defense, *Progress towards Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2014.

²² Ibid.

²³ World Bank, "Afghanistan Overview," 2013, accessed August 11, 2014, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan/overview>.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, 209.

²⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, *Progress towards Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2014.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Weinbaum, "Security in Afghanistan," 28.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Afghanistan (DDR, 2003-2008), accessed August 7, 2014, <http://escolapau.uab.cat/img/programas/desarme/mapa/afganistan09i.pdf>.

³¹ Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, 143.

³² Ibid., 229.

- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Bruno, “Afghanistan National Security Forces.”
- ³⁵ Laub, “The Taliban in Afghanistan.”
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Bruno, “Afghanistan National Security Forces.”
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, 288.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 205.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 275.
- ⁴² Government of Afghanistan, “Biography of General Bismillah,” accessed August 9, 2014, <http://mod.gov.af/en/page/2608>.
- ⁴³ Institute for the Study of War, “Afghanistan National Army,” accessed August 7, 2014, <https://www.understandingwar.org/afghanistan-national-army-ana>.
- ⁴⁴ Bruno, “Afghanistan National Security Forces.”
- ⁴⁵ Institute for the Study of War, “Afghanistan National Army.”
- ⁴⁶ Bruno, “Afghanistan National Security Forces.”
- ⁴⁷ Grossman, “Talking to Taliban 2011-2012: A Reflection,” 24.
- ⁴⁸ Institute for the Study of War, “Afghanistan National Army.”
- ⁴⁹ Bruno, “Afghanistan National Security Forces.”
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ Khalilzad, “Why the Country needs a Long-Term Commitment.”
- ⁵² Krickus, “The Afghanistan Questions,” 82; Weinbaum, “Security in Afghanistan,” 27.
- ⁵³ Krickus, “The Afghanistan Questions,” 82.
- ⁵⁴ Ayaz Wazir, “Will Afghanistan See Peace?” *The News*, February 7, 2014, accessed October 29, 2014, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-230977-Will-Afghanistan-see-peace>.

- ⁵⁵ Rashid, *Pakistan on the Brink*.
- ⁵⁶ Stephen Biddle, "Ending the War in Afghanistan, How to Avoid Failure on the Installment Plan," *Foreign Affairs*, accessed August 9, 2014, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139644/stephen-biddle/ending-the-war-in-afghanistan>.
- ⁵⁷ Laub, "The Taliban in Afghanistan."
- ⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Khalilzad, "Why the Country needs a Long-Term Commitment."
- ⁶¹ Dalrymple, "A Deadly Triangle."
- ⁶² Biddle, "Ending the War in Afghanistan."
- ⁶³ Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History*, 337.
- ⁶⁴ Mehrish, "Security and Development of Afghanistan," 29.
- ⁶⁵ Domínguez, "NATO Exit may Trigger 'Proxy War' in Afghanistan."
- ⁶⁶ Laub, "The Taliban in Afghanistan."
- ⁶⁷ Ibid.
- ⁶⁸ Mukhtar, "Afghanistan: Alternative Futures," 1.
- ⁶⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, *Progress towards Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2014.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid.
- ⁷¹ Krickus, "The Afghanistan Questions," 82.
- ⁷² Mukhtar, "Afghanistan: Alternative Futures," 73.
- ⁷³ Hamid Mir, "How to Move Forward in Afghanistan," *The News*, November 4, 2010, accessed July 23, 2014, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-13718-How-to-move-forward-in-Afghanistan>.
- ⁷⁴ Mukhtar, "Afghanistan: Alternative Futures," 73.
- ⁷⁵ Weinbaum, "Security in Afghanistan," 15.

⁷⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, *Progress towards Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2014.

⁷⁷ Lodhi, “Tougher Challenges Ahead.”

⁷⁸ Hurst and Mathers, “Strategic Implications of the Afghan Mother Lode.”

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF EXTERNAL FACTORS

Afghanistan's future will be determined by its neighbors and indirect influences from other global and regional players, including the US, Russia, India and Saudi Arabia.¹ Because of traditionally weak central governance, external actors are key to transforming the security environment. In recent times, Afghanistan has seen invasions from two super powers, the Soviet Union and the USA, in less than 30 years. These invasions collapsed the Afghan state mechanism. These invasions completely transformed the regional security matrix and significantly affected South Asia. US led Coalition plans to leave Afghanistan in 2014 is likely to be the next defining moment for the entire region. Without a robust, long term US commitment, external actors will pursue realist, self-interested agendas.

The United States

Since the Soviet invasion, South Asia became very important for the US. Nuclear proliferation, religious extremism, India's emergence as regional power, the China factor, and Afghanistan make South Asia vital to US global interests.² The US remains the most powerful and notable player for the South Asian security environment. It presently pursues a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Afghanistan.³ President Obama stated in 2014 that, "the future of Afghanistan must be decided by Afghans. But what the United States can do, what we will do, is secure our interests and help give the Afghans a chance, an opportunity to seek a long-overdue and hard-earned peace."⁴ And in another statement President Obama said "We have to recognize Afghanistan will not be a perfect place and

it is not America's responsibility to make it one."⁵ These somewhat incommensurable sentiments are likely to transmute the existing security environment of South Asia.

The US believes it achieved its objectives and the Al Qaeda network within Afghanistan has been effectively eliminated. ***** It views the ANSF as reasonably well-trained and equipped force that has reached its intended strength levels. The organs of effective management of governmental programs are in place, albeit in some places still weak and/or embryonic.⁶ Coalition forces have achieved significant development in the spheres of the training and education of Afghan Security Forces, civil-support activities, security cooperation, and internal development projects.⁷ For the Obama administration, this set the stage for withdrawal. On the ground, these achievements are extremely fragile. Indeed, cause-and-effect estimates indicate American policies can fuel many unpredictable responses with second, and third-order effects that can literally overwhelm the anticipated first-order response.⁸

US withdrawal is already underway and as stated by many policy makers is likely to proceed regardless of the strategic conditions.⁹ However, a security vacuum is likely to emerge after 2014 and attract many diverging interests. Outside interference has always been the biggest challenge to Afghanistan's internal stability.¹⁰ The Obama administration's execution of the newly evolved Af-Pak strategy was based on the hypothesis that the real problem for the Afghanistan lies in Pakistan. On the same lines, an aggressive diplomatic effort and CIA's operations, including drone attacks inside Pakistan to target the extremists' sanctuaries, was put into action.¹¹ After almost six years of this policy, not only Afghanistan, but Pakistan became more instable.¹² The US Af-

***** Osama Bin Laden killing provided this notion of victory.

Pak policy vision failed in the retrospect of bringing the peace in the region and challenges the correct understanding of Afghan problem.

The United States continues to seek a constructive relationship with Pakistan, one that advances both U.S. and Pakistani interests.¹³ Under a newly-elected government, Pakistan's relationship with the United States remains constructive. Both nations are engaged in maintaining bilateral cooperation in areas of mutual concern.¹⁴ For example, the US and Pakistan reached consensus on goals for counter terrorism, reconciliation processes, and a stable Afghanistan. Pakistan also plays a key role for the US in retrograding military equipment and forces from Afghanistan through ground routes and through Karachi Port. Nonetheless, the bilateral relationship has been strained in recent times.^{†††††} Despite all positive indicators, the US still feels that Taliban attacks in Afghanistan are launched from sanctuaries in Pakistan. According to a US military assessment, the Haqqani network and cross border attacks are the potential long term threats to Afghanistan's stability.¹⁵ Pakistan's military actions in the FATA, especially interrupting the production of IEDs, do not meet US expectations.

US engagement with India is based on the Asia-Pacific pivot, regional policies, and economic cooperation. Under Presidents Bush and Obama, India became a strategic partner.¹⁶ In the last decade, the development in US-India relations reached unprecedented levels. The US has also started a dialogue process with the SCO, and is providing the space to all acceptable interests.¹⁷ But American-Indian rapprochement

^{†††††} NATO accidental air attack on Pakistani border post and killing of Osama Bin Laden inside Pakistan without knowledge of Pakistan.

does not exist in a vacuum. It cannot be separated from relations with Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Russia

Besides the US, Russia historically viewed Afghanistan as an important regional interest. Russia has pursued for its interests since the Great Game in 1839.¹⁸ Due to the close proximity with Central Asia, Afghanistan affects Russian politics, security, and economics. During the American occupation, these interests are temporarily low profile. But the original Russian view almost remains the same; Leonid Brezhnev⁺⁺⁺⁺ believed a “hotbed of serious dangers to the security of Soviet state was created on our southern borders.”¹⁹ Soviet military and economic aid in the pre-invasion era during President Muhammad Daoud’s^{§§§§} times, was intense.²⁰ In 1979, the Soviets invaded and replaced Daoud.²¹

Russia is now rebuilding the relics of Soviet occupation and promoting its own political and cultural prowess.²² Geopolitical advantage, material advantage, and extremist links to Chechnya/ Dagestan, appear the prime Russian interests.²³ Russia sees a stable Afghanistan as in her interest as likely minimizing the threat of terrorism. Russia supports Afghan-led reconciliation and reintegration efforts, and has interests in stopping the flow of narcotics through Central Asia and the Northern Caucasus.²⁴ Russia supported the Coalition in OEF by providing maps, cold weather equipment, and moral support.²⁵ During the worst tensions between the US and Pakistan, Russia supported

⁺⁺⁺⁺ Leader of Soviet Union 1964-1982.

^{§§§§} Prime Minister of Afghanistan during 1959-63.

NATO by allowing the supplies through the Northern distribution route. Despite the tensions between NATO and Russia in 2008 during the war in Georgia, Russia still cooperated with the war against terror.²⁶

Russian interests in Afghanistan are also driven from her relationship with other countries, like India and Iran, which have common goals. New Delhi and Moscow agree, for example, on an "acceptable" regional solution.²⁷ Russian interests include investing in developmental projects. Moscow is working on almost 140 projects from its occupation era including a \$25 million house manufacturing facility in Kabul and a \$20 million renovation to the Soviet House of Science and Culture.²⁸ These Russian cooperation projects were launched in 2012, after the announcement of US military withdrawal.²⁹ Russia and Afghanistan are also expanding commercial relations. In 2011, President Karzai visited Russia, the first of its kind since Najibullah in 1980.³⁰ Russia opened trade office in Kabul and there has been a rise of almost \$500 million rise in bilateral trade. Moscow also has future fears. It is considering an enhanced deployment of border guards on the Tajik-Afghan border after the US withdrawal.³¹

Russia is in process of forcefully reasserting itself in global politics. For example, the Ukraine crisis and Crimean annexation show Russia seeks a more dominant role in the world, or at least in its neighborhood. The Eurasian Economic Union and security arrangements at Kyrgyzstan's main airfield reflect the growing Russian influence. This will cause frictions which can adversely affect Afghan and regional security. Besides friction, there are many converging interests such as defeating terrorism, stability, economic development, and drug trafficking,³² potentially affording the opportunity for better cooperation.

China

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO),^{*****} is a Chinese initiative and forum for Central Asian cooperation, with considerable effects for South Asia. With Russian assistance, China developed the SCO into an even more effective organization.³³ Russia and China have similarities of interests in Afghanistan.³⁴ The Ukraine crisis and South China Sea situation, has brought them further closer. Upon US withdrawal, China is likely to play a more important role in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is vital to Chinese security interests.³⁵ Dr. Maliha Lodhi,^{†††††} observed “As a senior Chinese official explained to me, once Western engagement reduces in Afghanistan “it will be up to the neighbors to coordinate efforts in support of its peace and stability.” The Afghan government also views Chinese development of their resources and infrastructure as very important for future peace and prosperity.³⁶

China’s interests in Afghanistan are four dimensional: promoting peace and security; assisting in economic development; supporting “political reconciliation”; and strengthening international cooperation.³⁷ The threat of extremism and linkages to its internal environment, i.e. the fragile peace in its Western region of Xinjiang,^{‡‡‡‡‡} predominate Chinese apprehensions. China is skeptical of the presence of US troops inside Afghanistan after 2014, and has often expressed concern. Beijing has given no

^{*****} Members include China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Observers group of this organization include Afghanistan, India, Iran, Mongolia, and Pakistan.

^{†††††} A renowned article writer and ex Pakistan ambassador to United Kingdom.

^{‡‡‡‡‡} Xinjiang, is Northwestern province, is home to a Muslim minority (Uighurs). The East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), pursues for Islamic State in Xinjiang, has been at the base of unrest/terrorists activities in the province.

indication of plans to commit security personnel itself and only has a police training program.³⁸

Afghanistan has huge natural resources; oil, copper, gold, and other precious metals and mineral resources. Mineral resources are estimated to value up to \$1 trillion dollars.³⁹ There are an estimated 1 million metric tons of rare earth elements within the Khanneshin carbonatite in Helmand Province and an estimated 1.5 million metric tons in all of southern Afghanistan.⁴⁰ China appears ahead in development in the areas of investment and economic projects.⁴¹ China is in process of developing/investment in the projects including Ayank Cooper Fields,⁴² oil in Amu Darya Basin, and oil refinery within 3 years.⁴³ China is also currently conducting a feasibility study for a rail system to support extraction efforts at the Aynak copper mine.⁴⁴ In the past two years China raised the profile of its diplomatic and economic engagement.⁴⁵ As part of its more assertive Asian diplomacy, China is playing an increasingly active role in Afghanistan.⁴⁶ In this backdrop China is part of different forums and initiatives and also spearheads SCO. China continues maintaining closer coordination with Pakistan, Russia, Iran, Turkey and India,⁴⁷ and remains part of many diplomatic initiatives working for peace in Afghanistan.⁴⁸ Beijing supports regional approach for long term settlement of Afghanistan.

Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei told media in Beijing that “the development of situation in Afghanistan is closely related to the peace and stability in the region. China is ready to work together with all relevant parties to take part in the peaceful reconstruction and reconciliation in Afghanistan, so as to jointly maintain peace

and stability.”⁴⁹ Regional relationships of China-Russia, India-China-Russia^{§§§§§§} and China-Pakistan, enhances the influence of China in the regional and Afghanistan security.⁵⁰ Therefore, in the present environment, China is poised to act as a stabilizing force in the region.⁵¹ A newly appointed Chinese envoy in July 2014, Mr. Sun Yuxi, reiterated the huge commercial role and its security interest in Afghanistan, but highlighted that it will not seek to fill a void after the exit of US Forces. He said that “Preserving Afghanistan’s stability is not a matter of adding troops but of helping Afghanistan to quickly rebuild. We hope to see a rapid decrease in weaponry and a rapid increase in wealth.”⁵²

India-Iran-Pakistan

The US, Russia, and China are important in Afghanistan, but the India-Iran-Pakistan matrix cannot be denied. India-Pakistan-Iran matrix is the most complicated, challenging, and intricate relationship, but is the most important element for the future peace of Afghanistan. The relations of Pakistan and India with Afghanistan, their diverging interest, very different visions, significantly impact the regional security.⁵³ India seeks political influence in Afghanistan and provides development assistance, promotes investment, regionalizes solutions to Afghanistan’s security and stability problems. India also uses Afghanistan to destabilize Pakistan, and is also in partnership to provide military training to ANA. Iran is also supportive of the NA group, Indian efforts, and provides the ports in Arabian Sea for trade. On the other side of equation, Pakistan

^{§§§§§§} At the Tokyo conference on Afghanistan, India’s former External Affairs Minister S M Krishna expressed the SCO is the right forum to resolve the Afghan crisis once the NATO forces withdrew

seeks to improve economic cooperation, build trust, block India's influence to safeguard its security, supports Pashtun population, and continuously work with international community for peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan. The Pakistani context, which most of the times remain less understood, is eloquently stated by Former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, "Security is not about retaining a Pakistani way of life, but is truly a matter of their "survival" as a nation-state."⁵⁴

Historically, Pakistan, India and Iran had good relations with the Afghanistan. The pre-Soviet invasion period witnesses the better relations of Afghanistan with India and Iran. We can say here that it was mainly due the cold war scenario, and due to the good relations of Afghanistan with Soviet Union. Pakistan before the Soviet Union had turbulent relations with Afghanistan, but due to dominant role being played in Global struggle against Soviet Union, the relations got improved. Afterwards, Pakistan had a dominant role in the development inside Afghanistan. In the bipolar world, India and Iran were in Soviet Union blocks and US supported Pakistan in South Asia.

The Indo-Pakistan rivalry does not require any explanation; their hostility lies at the heart of current war in Afghanistan.⁵⁵ Afghanistan under President Hamid Karzai attempted to navigate in between the rivalry between Pakistan and India, which makes it a deadly triangle.⁵⁶ With US influence, currently Afghanistan is turning to India to balance out Pakistan.⁵⁷ During 1990s, India and Pakistan supported the different groups inside Afghanistan i.e. Taliban (Pakistan) and NA (India and Iran), to transform the internal atmosphere of Afghanistan in favor of their respective interest. The GWOT and Unipolar world brought new changes in the political atmosphere of the South Asia. Russia, India, and Iran exerted their influence over NA to assist the ISAF attacks against

Al Qaeda and Taliban, and Pakistan provided the logistic, intelligence and moral support to the ISAF for operations inside Afghanistan. This remains the defining moment in the recent Afghan history. Due to the support to US against Taliban, Pakistan lost the influence over Taliban and the internal environment of Afghanistan. India and Iran (specifically India) while taking the advantage of the situation, took a leap ahead in increasing its influence in the internal environment of Afghanistan. India, also sought to enhance their security by increasing their control over the extended neighborhood.⁵⁸

In the recent past the US also visualized a more dominant role of India in the regional and global politics and supported a more active role of India inside Afghanistan.⁵⁹ New Delhi has long viewed South Asia as India's exclusive sphere of influence.⁶⁰ President George W Bush's administration gave unprecedented concession for the development of nuclear plants which underscored the Islamabad's insecurity and exacerbated the antagonism in the region, especially from the traditional ally-Pakistan.⁶¹ Afghanistan is important in the regional and global pursuits of India. Since 2001, India has tried to pursue a proactive Afghanistan policy. In many ways, Afghanistan has become emblematic of India's new and ambitious policy for the region.⁶² Afghanistan is being seen by many in India as a test case of India's role as a security provider in its own neighborhood.⁶³

India's prime interest appear one in which Afghanistan should not revert back in the hands of Pakistan's influenced Taliban. India is also busy in discussing with US, Russia, China and Iran for the common goals inside Afghanistan. Besides this Afghanistan also houses the enormous Indian economic interest; as the Indian growing economy needs energy and Central Asia is the best option for that. Lately India and Iran

also reached an agreement for the Chahbar port (Iran), as an exit port for the trade from central Asia through Afghanistan. In this backdrop, India is also developing good relations with Central Asian countries; India has airport facility in Kyrgyzstan and security cooperation training of the security forces of Tajikistan. These economic interests are very closely tied with the security of Afghanistan.

In the 90s, India and Iran (being in the Russian block) came close and started supporting NA against Taliban; which is still in the lead role in Afghanistan government. This has brought India-Pakistan's rivalry to the forefront, rather than Iran-Pakistan competition.⁶⁴ India and Pakistan remain two very important players for the security environment of South Asia. But, this paper is not meant to go into the details of India-Pakistan relations, and will only discuss those facts, which are happening inside Afghanistan and impacts the regional security. This rivalry had also contributed to the political tug of war in the 90s inside Afghanistan. Currently India is looking for the Afghanistan as free of influence of Pakistan and (or), Pakistan in cooperative mode to Indian regional and global interests. In focus on Afghanistan, India is trying to base her relations through its soft power of economic development and security cooperation.

In this backdrop India and Afghanistan signed a strategic partnership declaration in 2011,⁶⁵ which formalized cooperation on governance, economics, commerce, education, public administration, and security/law enforcement. In this declaration India commits responsibility of "training, equipping, and capacity building" of the ANSF. India acceded to Afghanistan's request for 150 army officers to receive training at Indian defense and military academies and also agreed to begin hosting training sessions for

Afghan police officers.⁶⁶ Recently, India also showed interest establishing an academy to train the ANSF which may be set up in Afghanistan.⁶⁷

India supports a variety of high-visibility projects and initiatives in Afghanistan. These ventures are primarily focused on major infrastructure projects, including electricity generation and transmission, road construction, and mining.⁶⁸ India has invested heavily in infrastructure development inside Afghanistan, in order to turn it into a corridor of trade through Central Asia.⁶⁹ This Indian investment is being done with purpose to influence Pashtuns population to leverage them into Indian side.⁷⁰ India has used its vocal support for Afghan President Karzai, an ethnic Pashtun educated in India, to demonstrate its keenness to revive its close ties with Pashtuns.⁷¹ But, India remains skeptical of Taliban reconciliation process. The possibility of a Pakistan-sponsored settlement between Taliban and US and the Afghan government remains a serious concern for India.⁷² India feels that this process has been initiated by Pakistan who is playing role in divergence with Indian vital interests inside Afghanistan.⁷³ India also raised concerns over this Pakistani effort with US. And as counter balance to this, India is achieving greater policy coordination with states like Russia and Iran.⁷⁴

India believes in checking Pakistan in all spheres especially inside Afghanistan. After the ISAF retrograde, India envisages greater responsibility in Afghanistan.⁷⁵ Lately a consortium of Indian companies, including Steel Authority of India, signed an agreement for three mines in the Hajigak iron (west of Kabul) ore deposits. The deposit is estimated worth \$420 billion and will employ 30,000 Afghans.⁷⁶ US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in her address on July 2011, also gave the US vision of same economic prospects of “New Silk Road” of connecting the Central Asia to the vibrant Indian

economy, benefitting Afghanistan and Pakistan through transit trade.⁷⁷ The economic projects such as Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI) gas pipeline, besides economic gains for all countries can also herald peace in the region.⁷⁸ To booster economic cooperation, India also sponsored Afghanistan's membership of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC).⁷⁹

India has emerged as great option for the US South Asia and Asia Pacific policy priorities. Assistant Secretary Blake told Congress in April 2011 that “a strategy of sustained, multi-faceted engagement with India contributes to stability and security in the South Asia region, and the world” and that “the global strategic partnership with India will remain among our top foreign policy initiatives.”⁸⁰ Leon Panetta, US Secretary of Defense, during June 2012 visit to India and Pakistan, gave nod to Indian military engagement in Afghanistan. US policy makers concluded Pakistan as an “Ally from Hell,”⁸¹ and now see India as a nascent great power that could help counter Chinese influence in Asia. Due to its own interest and history, Pakistan stands against this policy option. US. General Stanley A. McChrystal, ISAF commander, in 2009 said, increasing Indian influence in Afghanistan is likely to exacerbate regional tensions and encourage Pakistan countermeasures in India or Afghanistan.” India has not publically denounced the consideration of deployment its military forces inside Afghanistan without UN peacekeeping purpose, but some corners have proposed this option. Sushant K.Singh, editor of the Indian Journal Pragati, suggests the deployment of the Indian military inside Afghanistan will act as huge boost to India's anti-terrorist operations, militarily and psychologically, and is likely to shift battlegrounds away from Kashmir and the Indian

heartland. This action will be taken as extremely provocative by Pakistan, who is likely to respond aggressively.

The current hypothesis of US-Indian policy makers appears as managing Pakistan through its engagement in its internal front and fostering it to commit to the Indian terms inside Afghanistan. In the eyes of Pakistanis, they see this pursuit by India based on kautilya thoughts to gain a strategic encirclement, to both militarily and economically contain Pakistan from two fronts, thereby facilitating a greater Indian control over Pakistan's policies.⁸² A balanced policy has better prospects for long term stability. Isolating Pakistan, as advocated by significant numbers of liberal and conservative American politicians, is neither helpful nor sustainable in the long term. The ANFS should not be developed as a threat to Pakistan security. Pakistan will see the Indian training and development of ANSF as a threat to its security. A neutral country such as Turkey could be picked for this training, and mollify the competitive instincts of all Afghanistan's Indian training and influence of sizeable ANSF will raise the security concerns of Pakistan. If this influence expands, it can have serious regional implications. Pakistan has already has raised this issue at many forums. Border security, a capable ANSF, and a friendly environment will reduce competitive and hostile foreign interference.⁸³

Pakistan remains critical of these developments. India has almost left Pakistan's agriculture dry by controlling the major eastern rivers, which are lifeline for Pakistan. Now India seems to invest in the control of the western Pakistan waters, as India has extended help to Afghanistan for the plan to build 12 hydropower projects on river Kabul, with a total water storage capacity of 4.7 Million Acre Feet (MAF).⁸⁴ India, also

has used the US as a backdoor to cultivate its influence in Afghan regions closer to Pakistani border, and by this India put Pakistan on back foot and kept her options open for long term presence inside Afghanistan.⁸⁵ India maintains consulates in Jalalabad and Kandahar. Pakistan has brought this on the US and Afghan table on the basis of adverse effects on its internal law and order instability in its tribal regions and southern province.⁸⁶ The US supported these Indian Consulates as just right of Indian government to reach to Hindu and Sikh population at these places. The Indian embassy has been attacked twice, in 2008 and 2009, and two Indian-controlled guesthouses were bombed in 2010.⁸⁷ The blame for these attacks was placed on the Pakistan for supporting the Haqqani networks, which targeted the Indian sponsored locations inside Afghanistan. Such allegations by US, Afghanistan, and India are common these days.

Pakistan denies these all claims and ensures its complete support to the efforts of the international community for secure and peaceful Afghanistan. The new national security policy is directed to target the all militants including the alleged hideouts in North Waziristan.⁸⁸ Pakistan launched a military operation ‘Zarb-e-Hazb’ against all extremists including Haqqani Network, in North Waziristan to address these concerns. Mr. Sartaj Aziz, the foreign policy and security advisor to Pakistan current prime minister said, “The present government under the leadership of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has come to power with a clear mandate to rid the Pakistani society of extremism, intolerance and all forms of violence. This is vital for our survival as a nation [and] a prerequisite for our progress and prosperity.”⁸⁹

There are many public statements of Pakistan leaders and foreign policy statements regarding this response. Islamabad perceives these allegations as the influence

of India on Karzai Government, which finds fancy in putting all failures on Pakistan. Similar views to the Pentagon's assertions of passing the buck for the failure of OEF to Pakistan.⁹⁰ Pakistan views these allegations as baseless on the logic that there are quite number of forces, intelligence agencies and other agencies of ISAF, Afghanistan, and India are working. No one has yet provided them any proof of Pakistan's involvement. On the other hand, Pakistan is fighting war of its survival against the Pakistan factions of Taliban; TTP. TTP is the main group, which is fighting the Pakistan Armed Forces in the tribal regions, and since its inception in 2008, has caused maximum damage to Pakistan on its home front.⁹¹ Pakistan reiterates that stable Afghanistan as a fundamental requirement for ensuring their security. These security concerns drive the Pakistan's interests inside Afghanistan.⁹²

Afghanistan remained at the core of Pakistan's security and foreign policy over the last almost four decades. The 1979 Soviet Invasion, and Soviet-Indian connection alarmed then the Pakistan President Zia ul Haq, and he envisaged the pro-Soviet and Indian government inside Afghanistan as serious threat to the security of Pakistan.⁹³ It was then that ISI spearheaded the West support of Mujahedeen against Soviet Occupation.⁹⁴ In the aftermath of 9/11, Pakistan again supported the Coalition attack and declared as Non NATO ally. When we analyze the Pakistan's role inside Afghanistan one question really surfaces: "Presently, Pakistan is a struggling state, then why Pakistan really bother about the Afghanistan?"

Answer to this questions comes out that this was consequential as result of Soviet invasion. Since then, Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan is linked with security and economic gains from Central Asia. Other interests normally include, India-Pakistan

relations, Pashtun population, porous border, Central Asia, Russia, drug trafficking, and many minor issues. The military prowess of Pakistan is not aimed for the two front war/engagements. Therefore, Pakistan's security institutions and policy maker's desire for the congenial and cordial environment on its west to guard against the potential dangers from its eastern borders. Afghanistan serves as territorial depth against India and has remained the thought in Pakistan's security policy in the past, but now it has lost its relevance.⁹⁵ Pakistan also believes in the strong links of Afghanistan with its internal security. Afghanistan ground and ethnic Pashtun links with FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, ***** are also the important consideration for Pakistan's concerns inside Afghanistan. Pakistan security forces are fighting the sub-conventional threat in the same province for almost a decade. The creation of a durable peace with an Afghan government that is pro-Pakistan remains the vital interest of Pakistan in Afghanistan.⁹⁶

Pakistan previously supported a Pashtun dominated government inside Afghanistan, but recently has moved to a stance of broad based national government, which is in line with US policy objectives inside Afghanistan. Now diplomatically, Pakistani support a stable, secure, and peaceful Afghanistan through a broad based government. Pakistan has also invested huge in the developmental projects inside Afghanistan. In Jalalabad alone, two education and one infrastructure projects are underway.⁹⁷ Pakistan is funding different faculty blocks at universities and hospitals in multiple Afghan cities. Pakistan had already spent billions of dollars on providing healthcare, education, housing, and jobs to three million Afghan refugees over three decades; possibly the biggest aid to Afghan people in the recent time.⁹⁸ Pakistan feels

***** North Western province of Pakistan, is dominated ethnically with Pashtuns.

that words like strategic depth and backyard, a country for which Pakistan has made herself instable, misrepresent the true feelings of present Pakistan nation, who sees Afghan as their brothers.⁹⁹ These theories are taken by Pakistan as designed to provide exaggerated nobility to Indian intentions in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁰

Presently, there are many major issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and these issues have affected the relations in the recent past.¹⁰¹ The Durand Line^{††††††††} issue, is also a common bone of contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan's most wanted man: Mullah Fazal Ullah (TTP head) is in Afghanistan, and Pakistan expresses disappointment on this. The Swat, Bajaur and Mohmand chapters of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan have already established their strongholds in the Kunar and Nuristan provinces in Afghanistan.¹⁰² They have executed numerous attacks on Pakistani border posts from Afghan side. The spokesperson at the Foreign Office in July 2014 commented during the weekly media briefing that "We have asked Afghanistan repeatedly not to allow its territory to be used against Pakistan by terrorists and we expect Afghanistan to take action. As Pakistan is determined not to allow its territory to be used against them, in turn expects a similar commitment from Afghanistan."¹⁰³ According to Pakistani intelligence estimates, 223 attacks have been carried out from across the border since June 2010, including 14 major ones in which up to 200 militants were involved. About 150 security personnel have lost their lives. The attacks are believed to originate in Kunar and Nuristan from 18 to 20 camps run by Pakistani militants Maulana Fazlullah of Swat

^{††††††††} Durand Line is the 2,640 Kilometers (1,640 miles) is border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It was established in 1893 after the agreement between British India and Afghanistan, which separated the sphere of influence. Pakistan considers as an international border and Afghanistan denounces it as an international borders and supports the settlement of issue.

(Pakistan) and Abdul Wali (aka Omar Khalid) of Mohmand (Pakistan). At another occasion, Major General Asim Saleem Bajwa,***** in one of his Inter-Service Public Relations briefings in early July commented that “the leader of the TTP Mullah Fazlullah is sitting across the border in Kunar or Nuristan and Afghanistan needs to do something about it.”¹⁰⁴ In June 2014, Afghanistan pulled itself from the security talks in Islamabad on the alleged cross border attacks, which as per Afghanistan’s statements were “aimed at disrupting the second round of presidential elections.”¹⁰⁵ The independent verification of claims have not been carried out yet.

Pakistan sacrificed much and even affected its own internal security for Afghanistan. Pakistan is presently fighting on its internal front and almost the decade long war has already pushed Pakistan into a great instability. US lost 1200 soldiers in Afghanistan during operations in Afghanistan, and Pakistan is not fighting inside Afghanistan and has lost almost 3000 army and paramilitary soldiers.¹⁰⁶ Now in this situation, when Pakistan is heavily engaged in its fight against miscreants inside its own borders in FATA, The US has planned to militarily withdraw from Afghanistan. The US exit from Afghanistan without long term post conflict management is worrisome for the Pakistani policy makers, and Pakistan already has learned the hard lessons.¹⁰⁷

Pakistan took U turn in 2001 and provided possible support to US and its allies. This event turned all the extremist factions inside Afghanistan and inside Pakistan against Pakistan state and created the instability, which is unprecedented in country’s history. There are many possibilities and pitfalls of US exit from Afghanistan, but on face of it appears a nightmare for Pakistan. This all has serious security implications for Pakistan

***** Pakistan Armed Forces Inter Services Public Relations Director General.

and forces Pakistan to have its own future safe guard for the security concerns.

Rahimullah Yusufzai^{§§§§§§§§} an expert on tribal regions of Pakistan and Afghan, says “2014 and the Western withdrawal will not mean Pakistan’s problems are over.” He further articulates “If the Taliban cannot capture Kabul, which is highly likely, they will be operating from the border areas. So they may still need to come to Pakistan for shelter, funds and medical treatment, and the Pakistani Taliban will find safe havens in Afghanistan.”¹⁰⁸

These are the concerns which Pakistan is foreseeing that the wrath of complete instability may be pushed to the FATA and nullify the efforts of almost a decade. Militants’ threat appears high priority for of internal security of Pakistan, and this is also why Pakistan has called for the serious Afghans peace dialogue involving all factions.¹⁰⁹ Lisa Curtis, Senior Research Fellow, Asian Studies Center, The Heritage Foundation, mentioned in her testimony in 2013 before the Subcommittee House of Representatives, that Pakistani leaders appear to believe that US military forces will depart the region before Afghanistan is stabilized and thus calculate that continuing support for the Taliban and Haqqani network constitutes their best chance to counter Indian regional influence. Pakistan denies these allegations as it has suffered the most due to the GWOT and grown instability. Unfortunately, President Obama’s aggressive military withdrawal strategy and questions about whether the US will retain a residual military force presence in the country post-2014 only reinforces the Pakistan’s concern.¹¹⁰ This leaves US policy is a conundrum, in which American officials acknowledge the need to work with Pakistan on

^{§§§§§§§§} British Broadcasting Company Urdu correspondent and expert on Afghan militancy.

encouraging a peace process in Afghanistan, but also blames Pakistan on different pretexts i.e. Haqqani Network etc. In response to this, recently Pakistan has commenced operation in North Waziristan Agency, alleged base camp of Haqqanis.

As already highlighted that, Afghanistan has also remained at the core of US-Pakistan relations. Pakistani policy makers perceive a nightmare scenario for Afghanistan and Pakistan after the US forces leave the region. The US Af-Pak strategy included Pakistan into War Theater. The diplomatic surge in Islamabad and Kabul as a match with troops surge was carried out under the Richard Holbrooke and Marc Grossman,^{*****} to achieve the regional strategy for stabilized and sustained peace in Afghanistan.¹¹¹ But this strategy has increased instability in Western Pakistan.¹¹² Pakistan until today continues to raise serious reservations on the drone attacks, which commenced as part of Af-Pak strategy. And due to US agent Raymond Davis episode,^{††††††††} Osama killing by unprecedented US Special Forces' raid inside Pakistan and accidental aircraft attack on Pakistani border post, US-Pakistan relations have already seen awful times in 2011 and 2012. In response to all these, Pakistan blocked the supply lines of NATO to Afghanistan for some duration. Many conspiracies haunt the Pakistan's policy makers as explained about the other conspiracy theories in the region by Ahmad Rashid in his book "Pakistan on the Brink, The future of America, Pakistan, and Afghanistan." Pakistan also remains skeptical of the analysis that US policy makers believe of using Afghanistan as base for incursions inside Pakistan through sizeable camps and air bases.¹¹³

^{*****} US representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan as part Af-Pak Strategy.

^{††††††††} Raymond Davis was an American agent working in Pakistan and accidently killed two Pakistani Street boys

Presently US-Pakistan relations are stable; this remains important for the long term peace inside Afghanistan. Pakistan supported the sustained US-Taliban conversation which was an integral component of US national strategy and key part of 2011-12 diplomatic campaign in Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹¹⁴ Afghan president Hamid Karzai objection to opening of Taliban office in Doha has scuttled the negotiations. Public opinion in Pakistan also favors a negotiated settlement with the Afghan Taliban. Nearly two-thirds of Afghans, the survey found, believed that reconciliation between the government and AOGs would stabilize the country. It is also believed in few corners of US policy makers, that US success in Afghanistan may not be possible without Pakistan or putting check on Pakistan.¹¹⁵

In reality there is a requirement of reappraisal of Af-Pak and fine balance by the US in handling Afghanistan-India-Pakistan deadly triangle. The US should seek better India-Pakistan relations because it will have long term positive impacts. Its present South Asia Policy which apparently propagates the broader engagements with India, is creating security problem for Pakistan. This policy has also mainly transformed the political, economic and security environment of Afghanistan, as India enjoys the huge place, and Pakistan is marginalized. So the current frictions, issues, reservations, and mistrust of US and Pakistan are affecting the US-Pakistan relations, India-Pakistan relations and resultantly Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. Pakistan also remains party to of all the diplomatic forums for the peaceful Afghanistan and while working with all the stake holders. Pakistan is working with Istanbul initiative, SCO and other regional platforms on Afghanistan. China and Pakistan countries agree on the sustained international support

for Afghanistan is necessary to build peace and promote regional stability.¹¹⁶ These concerns tie Afghanistan very closely with the security of South Asia.

In the present circumstances, positive sum game appears a utopia and non-pragmatic policy option; because there are still many conflicting interests of different stakeholders inside Afghanistan. Even with the influence of internal environment of Pakistan until and unless the issues between Pakistan and India are not resolved, this thought remains a far destination. Indian influence on US and Afghanistan is forcing Pakistan to be more isolated and cornered in the international community. As per Pakistan, this should not be the way for the country, who has sacrificed so much.

Pakistan's ability at reaching to a cooperative mode of almost moving on the Indian regional directions is at tangent to the ground reality of Two Nation Theory and is the basis for creation of Pakistan. US policy makers have overlooked this fact and have disturbed the South Asian security balance in favor of India. Pakistan remains concerned over the Indian influence inside Afghanistan. As ex Pakistan Army Chief of Staff General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani stated, "Strategically, we cannot have an Afghan Army on our western border which has an Indian mindset and capabilities to take on Pakistan." As a result, the US is set to leave the South Asia in a very complex environment and in two pre-existing and overlapping conflicts: one local and other regional between India and Pakistan.¹¹⁷

Pakistan desires to see the friendly Afghanistan and one without much influence of India. The US is making an effort to convince Pakistan to envisage the stable Afghanistan with Indian presence and influence. Helping rebuild Afghanistan is a great cause, one where Pakistan and India contributed and one which the US can turn into the

major converging interest of both countries. The US vision of New Silk Route and resultant Afghan transit trade agreement between Pakistan, Afghanistan and India are the good examples of these prospects. It is a cause that Pakistan and India share, and both countries have deep and far reaching interests. These confidence-building measures can boost the relationship between these countries and also improve bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which have been clouded by mutual distrust in the recent past.

Third, and important part of this matrix, is Iran, a country very important to the region's stability. Iran's policy towards Afghanistan is dictated by the combination of its solidarity with Shia population, rivalry with Saudi Arabia, economic interests, and its own security concerns emerging from Afghanistan. Iran's goals in Afghanistan remain focused on maintaining friendly relations with the Afghan central government, preventing a Taliban return to power and minimizing western presence and influence. Iran-Russia and Iran-India relations also pursue common aims inside Afghanistan. Narcotics, refugees, ++++++ water sharing of Helmand River (Kamal Khan Dam Issue), religious bond, US presence, historical linkages and trade gears the Iran's interests inside Afghanistan.¹¹⁸

During 1990s era Iran supported the NA groups against the Saudi Arabia and Islamabad backed Taliban, and therefore has history of varied interest inside the happenings of Afghanistan. In the 1990s Afghanistan viewed Pakistan-Iran relationship as the main external factors which contributed the civil war.¹¹⁹ Al Qaeda and Taliban

++++++ Approximately one million registered Afghan refugees and at least 1.4 million Afghan migrants (non-refugees) currently reside in Iran.

were the main threats; as a result, Iran remained neutral for the OEF and did not object to the US-NA cooperation against Taliban. As indirectly it served Iran's interests inside Afghanistan. Iran also supported 2001 UN efforts inside Afghanistan against Taliban.¹²⁰ Tehran's strategy includes employing a soft-power campaign to promote a pro-Iranian sentiment in Western Afghanistan through a \$1 billion donor aid program to upgrade infrastructure, provide humanitarian, cultural/religious support, and economic assistance. Iran also desires to expand its sphere of influence beyond border regions into other parts of Afghanistan, particularly Kabul. Concurrently, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force (IRGC-QF) also provides calibrated lethal aid to the Taliban to attrite ISAF and expedite force withdrawal. Al-Qaeda had 16 of its members released from Iranian custody; dangerous among them were Saad bin Ladin (son of Osama bin Ladin), Saiful Adil (a former Egyptian security official), Suleman al-Gaith from Kuwait (a former Al-Qaeda spokesman) and Abu Hafs al-Mauritani who was once number-three in Al-Qaeda.¹²¹

This made Iran's role inside Afghanistan, very dubious. Tehran is also opposed to BSA; long term stay of the US military forces. ISAF withdrawal is likely to allow these stake holders to further pursue their interests more vigorously. In the present circumstances, Iran is diplomatically engaged on Iraq front, but will never leave her safeguards and her interests inside Afghanistan. Iran shares concerns with India, over the US-Taliban's negotiations.

Other Countries

Central Asian countries neighboring Afghanistan less Turkmenistan, also have problems from Taliban and extremism, and has ethnic linkages with Tajiks, and Uzbeks.

Different banned Central Asian groups and organizations; Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), are working from Afghanistan and has strong linkages with Al Qaeda and Taliban. Therefore these countries have interests in Afghanistan based on their fear of their internal problems. Besides this, these countries are landlocked and look towards Afghanistan for their economic interests of reaching their oil and gas to the international markets. The Central Asian states host portions of the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), will be key in ISAF's withdrawal. Russia has also started reemerging its influence and consequently airfield agreement in Kyrgyzstan was not extended beyond July 2014. Despite the termination of Kyrgyzstan's airfield access in July 2014 and NDN, US-Central Asian stated contribute the development of Afghanistan's infrastructure and economy. US also supports China and Russia to contribute to the stability and regional prosperity.

GCC, § § § § § § § § Middle East countries i.e. Saudi Arabia and UAE were and are consistent with their policy of supporting Taliban.¹²² Member states of the GCC continue to provide support to OEF and are working to provide financial support in the interest of a stable Afghanistan. Private GCC state citizens remain a source of considerable funding for Taliban and other insurgent and terrorist groups operating in the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The GCC countries remain critical support of air bases, logistics support, over flight and transit rights for operations inside Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia, has history of diplomatic support to Taliban. Due to its animosity with Iran, will keep its options for influencing anti Iran regime inside Afghanistan. Recent

§ § § § § § § § GCC members are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

closer US-Iran relations and Arab Spring have put a mark on US-Saudis relations, therefore, the money role of Saudi Arabia in Afghanistan cannot be ruled out.¹²³

Turkey draws influence in Afghanistan through its close alliance with US and Pakistan. Turkey is also part of the dialogue process in between Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran. In November 2011, Turkey organized the “Heart of Asia” conference in Istanbul, to have region speak for itself. Istanbul declaration was signed by Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, and India, which outlines the regional cooperation for future of Afghanistan.¹²⁴ Besides US and international forums, SCO, bilateral and trilateral discussion forums, and Istanbul Protocol commits countries as diverse as Russia, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to cooperate in countering terrorism, drug trafficking, and insurgency in Afghanistan and in the neighboring areas. With the exception of Russia, Turkey has good relations with all the stake holders. It also enjoys good relations with the present Afghan government, Taliban (during 90s) and NA leaders. Due, to the ethnic Turk linkages, Turkey also exerts its influence over General Rasheed Dostum.

There are many consequential and coincident interests and disparities among the stake holders on the vested interests inside Afghanistan. These interests are often diverging, sometimes converging, but most often competitive. Direct competition was held at bay due to the US presence. A US withdrawal can create a vacuum to be filled by its neighbors. Many of the parties support the objectives of stability and prosperity for Afghanistan, but they differ significantly on how best to achieve those objectives. Some experts believe that substantial differences between the regional actors on internal Afghan issues actually preclude cooperation and obviate a regional strategy. A win-win

situation for Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, regional states, NATO and the insurgents groups in Afghanistan only can happen in the reconciliation process among the Afghans (internally) and among region states and international stakeholders.¹²⁵ Reconciliation must be initiated simultaneously and in sync with reconstruction and political institutionalization. This cannot be achieved as long as all parties wish to show the other as the vanquished.

Conclusion

After 2014, Afghanistan's neighbors will significantly shape the country's future following. Without a regionally backed settlement, the greatest danger is proxy war. Previous CENTCOM commander General David Petraeus noted, "It's not possible to resolve the challenges internal to Afghanistan without addressing the challenges, especially in terms of security, related to Afghanistan's neighbors."¹²⁶ A non-interference agreement and policy of neutrality should be the way forward.¹²⁷ A working consensus among the neighbors and key regional players on counterterrorism and long term economic development can be reached through dialogue in available regional and international forums. A peace process involving all the factions of Afghan population, regional, players, and neighbors will help to ensure a successful security transition from ISAF to ANSF/ANA.

The US can facilitate the stabilizing factor through cooperative diplomacy. A Chinese alliance with Russia and other regional players can assist. Russia and the US can influence India while China has major influence in Islamabad. The combined efforts of China, India, and Russia could sway Tehran. Despite cultural affinity and political association, Russia is likely to have the largest say and dominate the security interests of

Central Asia.¹²⁸ Saudi Arabia and Iran can destabilize the security environment due to their traditional animosity. If approached correctly, they could also promote peace.

¹ Mukhtar, “Afghanistan: Alternative Futures,” 64.

² Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, 143.

³ C-SPAN, confirmation hearings of General John Campbell, Commander, ISAF, Senate Armed Services Committee, July 10, 2014.

⁴ ABC News, “President’s Obama statement on withdrawal from Afghanistan.”

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Hurst and Mathers, “Strategic Implications of the Afghan Mother Lode.”

⁷ Mukhtar, “Afghanistan: Alternative Futures,” 63.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Mehrish, “Security and Development of Afghanistan,” 33.

¹¹ Rashid, *Pakistan on the Brink*, 18, 90.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ U.S. Department of Defense, *Progress towards Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2014.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Hanauer and Chalk, “India’s and Pakistan’s Strategies,” x.

¹⁷ Pant, “India’s Changing Afghanistan Policy,” 15-36.

¹⁸ Khan, “Soviet Interests in Afghanistan,” 49-55.

¹⁹ Collins, *The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*, 124.

²⁰ Ibid., 30.

²¹ Krickus, “The Afghanistan Questions,” 10.

²² Kevin Seiff, “As US War Ends, Russia Returns to Afghanistan with Series of Investment Projects,” *Washington Post*, March 21, 2014, accessed July 21, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/as-us-war-ends-russia-returns-to-afghanistan-with-series-of-investment-projects/2014/03/21/11fab228-a5fc-11e3-b865-38b254d92063_story.html.

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²⁷ Pant, “India’s Changing Afghanistan Policy,” 23.

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³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ U.S. Department of Defense, *Progress towards Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2014.

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⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, “Opening remarks of Rana Banerji, on Af-Pak Relations Former Special Secretary,” July 16, 2014, accessed July 26, 2014, <http://www.ipcs.org/article/afghanistan/afghanistan-and-regional-security-after-elections-4562.html>.

¹⁰² Khadim Hussain, “Post-2014 Af-Pak,” *Dawn*, August 12, 2013, accessed July 25, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1035358>.

¹⁰³ The News, “Afghanistan should stop attacks on Pakistan from its soil,” July 18, 2014, accessed July 23, 2014, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-31664-Afghanistan-should-stop-attacks-on-Pakistan-from-its-soil-FO>.

¹⁰⁴ Chandran, “Mullah Fazlullah: Challenges.”

¹⁰⁵ The News, “Afghanistan to Boycott Security Talks in Pakistan,” June 2, 2014, accessed July 24, 2014, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-149528-Afghanistan-to-boycott-security-talks-in-Islamabad>.

¹⁰⁶ Mir, “How to Move Forward in Afghanistan.”

¹⁰⁷ Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, 233.

¹⁰⁸ Madiha Sattar, “End of Afghan War” *Dawn*, February 18, 2013, accessed July 25, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/786837/end-of-the-afghan-war-possibilities-and-pitfalls-ii-post-2014-afghanistan-pakistans-nightmare>.

¹⁰⁹ Lodhi, “Tougher Challenges Ahead.”

¹¹⁰ Curtis, *After the Withdrawal: The Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Part II)*.

¹¹¹ Grossman, “Talking to Taliban 2011-2012: A Reflection,” 23.

¹¹² Engelhardt, “Going for Broke,” in *The Case for Withdrawal*, 121.

¹¹³ Mehrish, “Security and Development of Afghanistan,” 33.

¹¹⁴ Grossman, “Talking to Taliban 2011-2012: A Reflection,” 22

¹¹⁵ Krickus, “The Afghanistan Questions,” 146.

¹¹⁶ Lodhi, “China’s Afghan Policy.”

¹¹⁷ Domínguez, “NATO Exit may Trigger ‘Proxy War’ in Afghanistan.”

¹¹⁸ Samad, “Iran’s Influence in Afghanistan after U.S. Pullout.”

¹¹⁹ Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, 35.

¹²⁰ Samad, “Iran’s Influence in Afghanistan after U.S. Pullout.”

¹²¹ Mir, “How to Move Forward in Afghanistan.”

¹²² Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, 33.

¹²³ Shinn and Dobbins, “Afghan Peace Talks: A Primer,” 63-64, 72-74.

¹²⁴ Grossman, “Talking to Taliban 2011-2012: A Reflection,” 23.

¹²⁵ Hussain, “Post-2014 Af-Pak.”

¹²⁶ Mukhtar, “Afghanistan: Alternative Futures,” 64.

¹²⁷ Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Opening remarks by Major General Ashok K Mehta; Ahmad Rashid, “Afghanistan’s Failed Transformation,” *The New York Times*, September 25, 2014, accessed November 4, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/26/opinion/afghanistans-failed-transformation.html>.

¹²⁸ Tanrisever, *Afghanistan and Central Asia*, 161.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Historically and in modern times, Afghanistan has been at the center of South Asian security. The Highway of Conquest^{*****} witnessed many invasions, incursions, and land grabs.¹ Alexander the Great (321 BC), Mongols (13th Century), Persian Safavids and Mughals in 16th and 17th century, came and invaded through Afghanistan to dominate parts or the whole of South Asia. In later times, Russia and Britain dominated the western parts of South Asia and turned Afghanistan into a buffer state between two empires.² The Soviet invasion and US OEF also had significant impacts. All these historical events point towards the immense importance of Afghan security for South Asia. Chapter 4 and 5 identified factors for internal Afghan stability and its importance for the security of all South Asia. Afghans traditionally resisted major invasions, including Alexander, the Persian emperor Darius, the British, the Soviets, and most recently the Americans. Its tribes do not accept foreign rule for long. Absent a foreign enemy, they have little acceptance of each other, either.

Especially over the last four decades, Afghanistan has attracted intervention in many forms, generated and exported several trends in instability and been the focus of political currents. If the world community fails in its current stability aims, Afghanistan will be the epicenter of even greater national and regional destabilization. As Kaplan observed, “stabilizing Afghanistan is about more than just the anti-terror war against Al-

***** Highway of conquest is given the name because, Afghanistan has remained on the route of many warriors and kings.

Qaida and Taliban; it is about the securing the future prosperity of whole of southern Eurasia.”³

The international community commenced the GWOT in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. This war exacerbated instability in many parts of Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia. These wars changed the security balance by changing the nature of war, the security of nation states, and even world power symmetries. Nonstate actors increased their power and role. The GWOT could be the main reason behind the emerging global civil war within Islam.⁴

Security Implications and Way Forward

US withdrawal is occurring at a time when the Afghan government is still fragile. The ANSF lacks the requisite capability to enforce security against the growing Taliban insurgency. Internal Afghan feuding and political gridlock will undermine even the most well intentioned and rational attempts at cooperation. Governmental weakness and political uncertainty will attract the competitive involvement of different stakeholders, both internal and external, and destabilize Afghanistan and the entire region. The possibility of widespread ethnic and sectarian civil war benefits no stakeholder. It should frighten all concerned and foster international and internal Afghan cooperation.⁵ Nonetheless, the lack of trust and realist political calculations will undermine cooperation. Only a long term and sustained US commitment to a peaceful, prosperous, and secure Afghanistan will forestall increasing anarchy and enable the confidence necessary for cooperation.

In the back drop of American political and economic realities, robust engagement in Afghanistan is unsustainable. The US is committed to withdrawal in 2014.⁶ This bodes

ill. The Soviets left Afghanistan in a vacuum. As a consequence, the country suffered a deep crisis which wrought more destruction than the Soviets.⁷ A real danger exists of Afghanistan once again becoming "the cockpit of Asia."⁸ On taking office, President Obama declared the end of counterinsurgency operations inside Afghanistan. US policymakers believe the end 2014 will set the stage for the withdrawal of forces. President Obama once stated "this long war will come to a responsible end." The US role may end in 2014, but war will not. US combat troops are likely to leave behind a grinding and inconclusive civil war between an increasingly ethnic based Afghan government and the Taliban.⁹ A Pentagon assessment of the ANFS predicts the Taliban will pick up the tempo of its operations and expand areas under its control between 2015 and 2018.¹⁰

Success in contemporary war requires a conception in totality beyond tidy nation state or even terrorist group containers. When we critically analyze the goals the GWOT set in 2001, they have not been achieved. The US consistently tailored its campaign aims to the elimination of Al Qaeda. Despite pronouncements of victory, Afghanistan is still unstable and extremists have increased their strength and influence. As result of Af-Pak, Pakistan has also become more instable. It is presently wrapped in its own internal conflict. Realist rational analysis predicts the distraction of Pakistan's internal conflict will be an opportunity of free space for Indian prosperity and regional domination.

Tribal culture matters in Afghanistan. It is a culture of revenge based on rivalries, animosity and grudges. Ethnic clashes within and among Hazara, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Pashtuns is a common phenomenon.¹¹ Clan and tribal conflicts are a seemingly

†††††††††† Afghanistan was worded as Cockpits of Asia by the Lord Curzon: the 19th century British imperial figure.

permanent aspect of Afghanistan. Even third generations take revenge on their ancestral baggage. If there is to be any hope for stability, the Taliban must be brought into the government before the US completely departs.

Current US policy is directed toward building a strong government with a good economy to provide a better quality of life and security. The underlying assumption that a good quality of life will attract and influence Afghans, and affect the thinking of the Taliban, is questionable. The concept of state and security is different in Afghan culture.¹² Afghans are familiar with the lack of human security, and have traditional communal security rather than state security. Afghans love their independence, and they can patiently bear misfortune and poverty, but cannot reconcile to foreign rule¹³ or even strongly centralized national rule.

The Taliban and Afghan government do not trust each other. In civil wars, trust is most reliably generated by outside powers.¹⁴ A modicum of political trust must occur before ISAF withdrawal. If this condition does not happen, it is highly unlikely to ever occur. The Taliban and Afghan government will control their areas but neither will establish the control over entire country. Widespread anarchy and violence will once again erupt. This will imperil the security of the entire region.¹⁵ The signs are ominous. The dialogue and reconciliation process is already delayed, the outcome of the presidential elections compromise remains disputed, especially Abdullah's support groups, and control of the government is limited. Afghanistan stands at the juncture of another period of growing instability, which will only worsen after ISAF withdrawal.

If the US wants to succeed in its global war against terrorism, it must focus its resources and attention on securing and stabilizing Afghanistan.¹⁶ The US has sown

disorder in the Middle East and South Asia, which has long term implications. If the US and its allies do not put these situations in order, the efforts, resources and energy put in last decade will be for naught. The cooperation of all major players should be solicited in an effort to work toward a stable and prosperous Afghanistan, an objective in the best interests of all parties. The United States should continue financial and military assistance and encourage international institutions and donors to provide additional investments.¹⁷

The US sees Taliban through a western lens. Until now, the Taliban have been unable to turn limited tactical successes into strategic or operational gains. But the Taliban are a product of a resilient and survivable culture. After ISAF withdrawal, they can increase the pace of their activities and derail the Afghan government. A better US exit strategy would move vigorously in talks with the Taliban.¹⁸ Isolating Al Qaeda should remain as the precondition for any settlement. But present demands of denouncing violence and disarmament are not in line with Pashtun or any Afghan culture. They may be used as bargaining chips, but not as necessary conditions.

Concurrently, the US and Afghan government should make efforts to reduce the Taliban's space in tribal culture. Afghanistan is a tribal and Islamic society, and the Taliban use these two factors to influence the environment in eastern Pashtun areas. Despite recent US-Taliban negotiation, the Taliban have not shown a shift in their anti US and Afghan government stance. US reliance on the NA and exported leaders such as Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani, lack a base of support. Similar to the NA, the Taliban are also sons of the soil. The NA enjoys popular support in Western and Northern parts not because of some public service, but due to the sacrifices of Ahmad Shah Masood against the Soviets. According to the Afghan culture, people favor the courageous leaders

who possess sound character. The US needs to work along these lines to forge a sustainable solution.

From a broad perspective, trade, energy, narcotics interdiction, reconstruction, stability, and control of extremism are the basis for regional cooperation.¹⁹ Policy objectives of ‘peace’ or ‘ending the war’ are misconceived and inadequate. The more appropriate policy goal is reconstructing the country as part of the interstate and economic structure of the entire region.²⁰ Afghanistan’s stability rests with a political solution involving all the internal players, including the Taliban, and external stake holders, including Iran. As a key player, special effort should be made to include Pakistan’s concerns in the final settlement.

No single country can bring stability in Afghanistan. A joint stability and security strategy involving all neighboring countries, Russia, the United States, non-neighboring Central Asian states, and a special contact group including Turkey, Saudi Arabia and UAE, should formulate a cooperative plan.²¹ There should be check on the enhanced Indian role in Afghanistan, because it has prospects of becoming more spoiler than enabler. These initiatives should be spearheaded by Afghanistan and supported by the US. If all countries agree on noninterference with sincerity, then possibly peace can replace the uneasy and tense situation. Without a long term US commitment, it remains a utopian and impractical recommendation. Common economic opportunities which do not target the security concerns of any neighbor can also build better relationship opportunities. Extremism, economic projects, smuggling and drug trafficking can also drive a convergence of interests among all stakeholders.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should focus on in-depth study of Afghan tribal culture and its impacts on governance. Is Afghan tribal and clan culture truly as intractable as it seems? Is there any path, peaceful or otherwise, to modernity? If a unified Afghan nationalism is impossible, are there intermediate forms of cooperative decentralized autonomy that, while lacking modern efficiency and development, can at least insure stability and prevent destructive competition? Finally, future research could examine the design of political and security institutions founded on tribal cultures, and how Taliban can be integrated in the Afghanistan political process.

Conclusion

Afghanistan is a resilient and warrior nation, but it is not a nation-state in the traditional sense. It has passed through very arduous times and surfaced, essentially unchanged, again. The current situation reflects this instability, but the future can be better. Afghanistan needs a stable and peaceful environment for its own and regional, arguably global, long term prosperity. It is dependent on the fine balance between the interests of Afghanistan and regional players. Without internal security, it will turn into a hotbed of ethnic proxies of external actors and lead to even more conflict. As physically distant powers, the US and its allies are in the best position to direct Afghanistan towards a better future. Regional players must be brought to consensus on the future. Political and economic stability provides the environment for better security. Political and economic activity of the country is dependent on good governance. Only inclusive and good governance is likely to stem and reverse the cycle of violence.

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- ¹ Klass, *Afghanistan: The Great Game Revisited*, 1.
- ² Khan, "Soviet Interests in Afghanistan," 18.
- ³ Grossman, "Talking to Taliban 2011-2012: A Reflection," 25.
- ⁴ Krickus, "The Afghanistan Questions," summary.
- ⁵ Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Opening remarks by Major General Ashok K Mehta.
- ⁶ Khalilzad, "Why the Country needs a Long-Term Commitment."
- ⁷ Wazir, "Will Afghanistan See Peace?"
- ⁸ Rashid, "Before the Endgame: America's Fatal Flaws in Afghanistan."
- ⁹ Biddle, "Ending the War in Afghanistan."
- ¹⁰ Laub, "The Taliban in Afghanistan."
- ¹¹ Shinn and Dobbins, "Afghan Peace Talks: A Primer," 8, 14, and 33.
- ¹² Maley, "Building State and Security," in *Building State and Security in Afghanistan*, 13.
- ¹³ Schofield, *Afghanistan Frontier*, 115.
- ¹⁴ Maley, "Building State and Security," in *Building State and Security in Afghanistan*, 19.
- ¹⁵ Lodhi, "Tougher Challenges Ahead."
- ¹⁶ Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, 359.
- ¹⁷ Mukhtar, "Afghanistan: Alternative Futures," 73.
- ¹⁸ Biddle, "Ending the War in Afghanistan."
- ¹⁹ Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, 213.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 27.
- ²¹ Mir, "How to Move Forward in Afghanistan."

APPENDIX A

Important Happenings of ANA till 2014

1. **2002**. US named “lead nation,” assuming responsibility for developing the ANA, and The Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan (OMC-A) was created, which was responsible for training the ANA and assisting German efforts to train the ANP.

2. **2003**. Strength reached to 1,750.

2. **2004**. Strength reached to 13,000.

3. **2005**. OMC-A renamed Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan (OSC-A) after U.S. ANP training efforts were transferred to the U.S. Department of Defense. Strength reached to 21,200.

4. **2006**. OSC-A renamed Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan (CSTC-A) under US CENTCOM authority. CSTC-A has primary responsibility for managing the training and mentoring of ANA. A brigade size force, under CSTC-A command, is undertaking this task. Strength reached to 26,900.

5. **2008**. CSTC-A transferred to USFOR-An authority.

6. **2009 and 2010**. ANA grew to more than 270,000 (42 percent); 57 percent, adding 68,000 and 35,000 for police. Since then, as part of Obama surge, for unity of effort, US led NATO mission as NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) and Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan (CSTC-A), are training and developing the ANSF. Now a three star command taken over by General William B. Caldwell, as commander of NATO Training Mission for Afghanistan. On assumption of his command, he said "Our mission is about teaming with Afghans to build a bright, dynamic future for this sovereign nation."

7. **2011**. Strength of ANA reached to 164,000.

8. **2012 and 2013**. As agreed by President Obama and President Karzai at their January 2013 meeting in Washington, D.C., and in line with commitments made at the Lisbon and Chicago NATO summits, "Milestone 2013" was announced on June 18, 2013. It marked ISAF's official transition to its new role; the ANSF has grown to approximately 96 percent of its authorized end-strength of 352,000 personnel.

9. **2014**. As of March 2014, ANSF force strength reached 340,632 personnel, which is 97.4 percent of the 352,000 authorized end-strength. Including 26,632 ALP personnel, security forces totaled 376,264. Almost all ANSF unit and major equipment fielding is complete. The technologically complex development of the AAF lags behind other elements of the ANSF and some capabilities will not reach full operational status until 2017. The ANA is nearing completion of fielding its programmed 309 *Kandaks*. The ANA is scheduled to receive all of its equipment by July 2014 and the last *Kandak* will complete training in January 2015.

APPENDIX B

Draft Bilateral Security Agreement¹

Main Articles of draft Bilateral Security Agreement, as agreed between US Secretary of State and Afghanistan President Mr. Hamid Karzai in 2013, are as under:-

1. The Parties shall continue to foster close cooperation to strengthen security and stability in Afghanistan, counter-terrorism, contribute to regional and international peace and stability, and enhance the ability of Afghanistan to deter internal and external threats against its sovereignty, security, territorial integrity, national unity, and its constitutional order. Unless mutually agreed, United States forces shall not conduct combat operations.

2. To that end, the United States shall undertake supporting activities, as may be agreed, in close cooperation and coordination with Afghanistan, to assist ANSF in developing capabilities required to provide security for all Afghans including as may be mutually agreed: advising, training, equipping, supporting, and sustaining ANSF, including in field engineering, countering improvised explosive devices and explosive ordnance disposal; establishing and upgrading ANSF transportation and logistics systems; developing intelligence sharing capabilities; strengthening Afghanistan's Air Force capabilities; conducting combined military exercises; and other activities as may be agreed. The Parties will continue to work on the details of ANDSF development as set forth in the Afghan Program of Record, at the Chicago Summit in 2012, and in the context of the Security Consultative Forum.

3. The Parties recognize that ANSF are responsible for securing the people and territory of Afghanistan. The Parties shall work to enhance ANSF's ability to deter and respond to internal and external threats. Upon request, the United States shall urgently

determine support it is prepared to provide ANDSF in order to respond to threats to Afghanistan's security.

4. The Parties acknowledge that U.S. military operations to defeat al-Qaida and its affiliates may be appropriate in the common fight against terrorism. The Parties agree to continue their close cooperation and coordination toward those ends, with the intention of protecting U.S. and Afghan national interests without unilateral U.S. military counter-terrorism operations. U.S. military counter-terrorism operations are intended to complement and support ANSF's counter-terrorism operations, with the goal of maintaining ANSF lead, and with full respect for Afghan sovereignty and full regard for the safety and security of the Afghan people, including in their homes.

5. In furtherance of the activities and operations referred to in this Article, and for other purposes and missions as may be mutually agreed, and consistent with the authorizations as detailed in this Agreement, United States forces may undertake transit, support, and related activities, including as may be necessary to support themselves while they are present in Afghanistan under the terms of this Agreement, and such other activities as detailed in this Agreement, or as may be mutually agreed.

This Agreement, including any Annexes and any Implementing Agreements or Arrangements, provides the necessary authorizations for the presence and activities of United States forces in Afghanistan and defines the terms and conditions that describe that presence, and in the specific situations indicated herein.

¹ Council of Foreign Relations, "United States and Afghanistan's security and Defense Cooperation Agreement," November 21, 2013, accessed August 9, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/united-states-afghanistans-security-defense-cooperation-agreement-november-2013/p31921>.

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